

CHOICE

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Food additives

... feeling twitchy?

Snack time:

What's in muesli, breakfast and snack bars?

Appliance shake-up

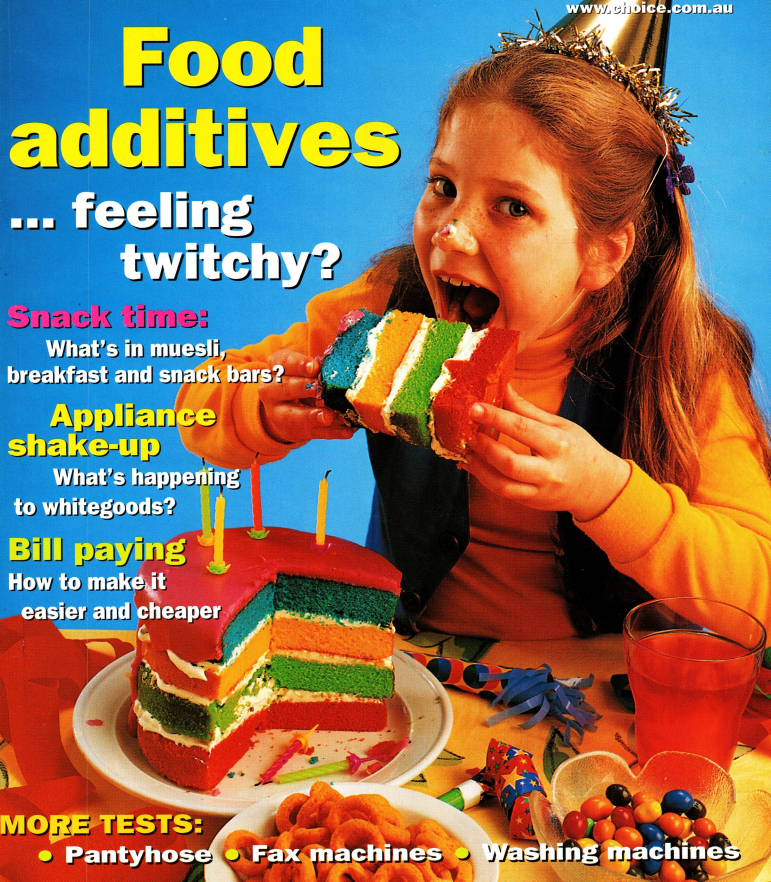
What's happening to whitegoods?

Bill paying

How to make it easier and cheaper

MORE TESTS:

• Pantyhose • Fax machines • Washing machines



Manufacturers trying it on



Louise Sylvan

The notion of independence is increasingly overused and misused in a competitive yet shrinking market buffeted by rapid global and technological change.

But independence is crucial to CHOICE and the Australian Consumers' Association. It was a founding principle of the organisation and as we approach our 40th year, it remains so.

We strive to maintain that independence and our enviable reputation, as members know, by never taking money from advertising, sponsors or government. We raise what we spend.

Another way we seek to protect our independence is not to allow companies to use our name or our results in advertising or promotions. And we're sometimes criticised for pursuing this position. But there's a good reason.

No advertising is ever a balanced presentation of the facts. For example, there's no such thing as the 'best' bank account — it's a best bank account only for a limited number of consumers with certain spending patterns. For other consumers it might be, in fact, the worst bank account. So we don't want banks or other businesses advertising that we've ranked them 'number one', because for many consumers it will just be untrue. And you could be sure any qualifiers would be in the fine print.

Recognising the value of our reputation, manufacturers and service providers would dearly love to say that CHOICE recommends their product. And some actually try it on.

So we hope you can help us protect our independence. No one is allowed to use the name of CHOICE or the Australian Consumers' Association in advertising or brochures or marketing to sell their products. If you see this anywhere, please let us know. We follow up each case. And thanks in advance for your help.

Louise Sylvan, CEO

Your letters

We welcome the letters you send us — please always include a daytime telephone number so we can contact you quickly if we want to follow up your letter. We're sorry we can't personally answer every letter we receive, but we do use them in our research. Thanks for taking the time to keep in touch.

Write to us at CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204.
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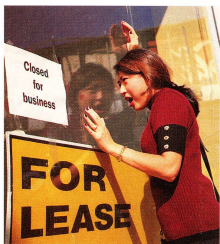
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CHOICE thoroughly tests just about anything that can be tested. Here, we assess the type of lifestyle tests you'll find in other publications, and show that you're getting a lot more value for your money from us.



RUSSELL HOBBS CLASSIC TOASTER
Tester: Erica Power, business consultant.
Price: \$69.95
Stockists: Small electrical retailers and department stores.
Features: Extra-lift lever. Cool to touch. Cancel button. Frozen and reheat functions. Removable crumb-tray. Extra-wide bread slots.
Comment: Extra-lift levers on toasters are a bit like car air-conditioning units — standard in new models, but, as Erica found out, it's a feature that gives you



Choice Tests

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Do you have to pay a fortune for pantyhose that are sheer, smooth and silky and also last through a few wearings? We put more than 140 pairs through a user trial to find out.



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Muesli bars are generally promoted as healthy, wholesome snacks. But do they live up to their reputation? We looked at over 100 muesli, breakfast and other snack bars to give you the answer.

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If you're in the market for a fax machine, you can choose between thermal and plain-paper models. We tell you the pros and cons of each type, and provide test results for 11 machines.



30 Update: Washing machines

Which of the top loaders on the market gets your washing clean and doesn't cost the earth?

● CHOICEcuts

Melatonin now available in Australia ... or perhaps not

WHILE IN THE US, READER Meg Henderson of Victoria tried melatonin, the much-acclaimed drug for sleeping problems, and found it highly effective.

Back here, she couldn't get any more melatonin as it hasn't been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). So she was delighted when she received a chemist's flyer: melatonin, it told her, was now available in Australia.

She bought the new product, but said "it wasn't working, so I looked at it a little closer". According to the label, it's a 'Homeopathic Medicine' and contains a "Homeopathic Ingredient 3 mg Melatonin 6x per tablet".

Homeopaths use 6x to signify that the active ingredient has been diluted six times, each time by a factor of ten. By the end of this process, says Stephen McDonald, NSW president of the Australian Homeopathic Association, there's "some of the original substance there, but it would be infinitesimal".

The active ingredients in homeopathic remedies don't need to be approved, so it's perfectly legal for them to contain melatonin — as long as they've been

through at least five dilutions. By then, only about 0.001% of a remedy would be active ingredient.

The dilution of a homeopathic remedy, says Mr McDonald, would usually simply be expressed as "6x", but he's not familiar with the 3 mg notation.

The manufacturer, Bioglan, declined to confirm exactly how much melatonin was in each tablet. According to CHOICE's calculations, if the tablets were at an ordinary 6x dilution, they'd contain a grand total of 0.00054 mg of melatonin each; more than 0.0054 mg would take them outside the limit for homeopathic remedies.

The tablets Ms Henderson bought didn't contain anywhere near the 3 mg she'd expected. She believes that what she bought was "only a placebo" and feels that she's been misled. "I think the



dilution factor should be clear — most people don't know what homeopathic means".

Bioglan claims its product is not misleading as it's clearly labelled as homeopathic.

The Office of Complementary Medicines (part of the TGA) is about to review its stance on homeopathic medicines, prompted by an increase in consumer inquiries.

Homeopathy claims to cure like with like: a tiny amount of a substance you'd expect to cause the symptoms you're experiencing is claimed to stimulate your body's natural immunity and cure them instead.

So the traditional homeopathic remedy for sleeplessness would be a tiny quantity of a substance such as coffee, which causes sleeplessness. Mr McDonald wouldn't rule out using melatonin — sometimes a tiny amount of a cure, instead of a cause, is used. But this isn't traditional homeopathy, says Mr McDonald, and his association wouldn't endorse it.

More haggling tips

CHOICE READERS HAVE SENT IN SOME GREAT TIPS ON getting a bargain — as well as some impressive success stories — since we looked at haggling last December. Here are some of the best suggestions.

Glenn Hilling of Victoria, who recently negotiated a \$5000 saving on a Holden Vectra, offers the following tips for aspiring bargain hunters:



■ Never let the dealer know how much you want to spend, but keep him or her guessing. That way you'll get the best price possible, rather than one tailored to how much you're prepared to pay.

■ Be prepared to walk away and try elsewhere, but leave your contact details so that the dealer can come back to you with a better offer.

■ The dealer may not be prepared to budge on the price of the car itself, but may agree to throw in accessories, which usually don't come with the car, at no extra cost.

■ Leave it to the end of the month — the dealer may be keen to close the sale to gain from an incentive scheme or meet a quota.

Morgan Dugan of NSW says that her husband, who's a sales professional himself and knows the tricks of the trade, always asks questions that require an answer. So instead of asking "is that the best price you can offer?", ask "What is the best price you can offer?". Don't say anything more — wait for a response. It always works, says Mrs Dugan.

But Bill Struensee of South Australia warns bargain hunters to be cautious. A good price, he says, may come at the expense of good after-sales service. You may be disappointed if you have problems with the fruits of your haggling. Some discount stores, particularly computer retailers, may not have the backup you need, he suggests, and you may have to pay for help elsewhere.

Recycle those cans

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE TIN OF FOOD OR PET FOOD, the aerosol can or paint tin you just bought is guaranteed to have some recycled steel in it (if it's made of steel), perhaps as much as 25% to 40%?

Steel is the most commonly recycled material in the world. It's fully recyclable and can be used an infinite number of times. So it makes sense to recycle it — every single can we use, which adds up to about 7 kg of steel cans per person each year. Unlike with some other recyclable materials, there's no oversupply problem. BHP Steel, Australia's major steel producer, can recycle as much steel as is returned to it.

Currently about 550 million steel cans are being recycled in Australia. That's about 30% of production. By June next year, the National Steel Can Recycling Campaign — an alliance of industry groups and the Planet Ark Environmental Foundation — hopes to increase the steel can recycling rate to 45%, and to make recycling available to 80% of the Australian population.

At present about 15 million people in 231 councils in all states and territories have access to steel can recycling. If you're not sure whether your council is participating, give them a call, or check on the steel can recycling web site: www.steelcans.com.au.

Before you put steel cans into your recycling container, empty them, rinse them in your left-over washing up water, put the lid into the can and then carefully squash the top together. Don't squash aerosol cans, but take the plastic lid off. And make sure paint tins are empty or the residue is dry.

And if you're not sure whether a can is made of steel, place a magnet next to it — if it sticks, it's steel and can be recycled.



Correction and update

Mobile phones

January/February 1999

In the table on page 17 we said the ERICSSON GH 688 didn't beep at intervals during calls to help you keep track of time. Ericsson tells us you can turn on this feature using the phone's menu. This change makes no difference to the phone's scoring or rank order in the test.

Ericsson also tells us a vibration feature is optional with its phones, depending on the battery used.

Tips & Traps Over 100,000 Australians lost their money in fraudulent and illegal investments in the last 10 years. Here we review the latest investment news from the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) and give you tips on how to avoid investment pitfalls. For further information call the ASIC infoline on 1300 300 630 or check its website on www.asic.gov.au.

ASIC Internet joke tricks investors

A fake Internet site promoting an investment in Swiss Millennium Bug Insurance (SMBI) seemed promising enough for 233 investors who committed themselves to investment packages of \$10,000 or \$50,000 each.

The site claimed SMBI was offering blue chip companies insurance against losses from the millennium bug. It said the company would charge high premiums and investors could triple their money in only 15 months.

The fake website was in fact placed by ASIC. Investors could have easily discovered the hoax by conducting a free Internet search on the ASIC website as the investment scheme hadn't lodged a prospectus and the company didn't exist.

The investors were lucky: instead of losing their money to a fake company they received an email with investment information from ASIC.

Internet investment scams

In the past two years ASIC has investigated an increasing number of online crimes, including:

- An Internet publisher giving investment advice without a licence.
- An Internet site promoting a tree plantation investment scheme in breach of the Corporations Law.
- Websites offering "hot tips" about securities or publishing unregistered prospectuses.

Investment sites on the Internet targeting Australian investors are regulated by the Corporations Law. An Internet adviser must be licensed and an Internet investment scheme must lodge a prospectus with ASIC.

ASIC is monitoring the Internet to detect and prosecute investment fraud.

CHOICE advice

Before you invest in a scheme promoted on the Internet or follow online investment advice ring the ASIC infoline or search the website to check if:

- The company or investment scheme you want to invest in exists and is registered in Australia.
- The investment scheme has lodged a prospectus.
- The adviser is licensed.

If you detect a dubious investment site, contact the ASIC infoline.

● CHOICEcuts

Lifetime health cover

A NEW PLAN TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG people to take out private health insurance and discourage 'hit and runs' for private health insurance was announced as part of the federal Budget and will be introduced on July 1 this year.

Under Lifetime Health Cover health funds must set different premiums depending on the age of a member first taking out hospital cover with a registered health fund. It's designed to encourage people to join early in life and maintain their membership. People who take out hospital cover by the time they are 30 and maintain their membership will pay lower premiums than those who join after 30, for whom a 2% premium loading will apply for each year after the age of 30. The loading is capped at a maximum of 70% above the premium payable by a person who joins at the age of 30.

Existing health fund members with hospital cover, no matter what their age, will be treated as if they'd joined by the age of 30. And there will be a grace period of 12 months from July 1, during

which people can join a health fund and be treated as existing members.

Special provisions will apply to those born on or before July 1, 1934. They can take out hospital cover at any time in the future without paying a loading for joining later in life.

It's also important to remember that there will be no change to universal eligibility for Medicare, so no-one will be denied access to medical or hospital care because they're unable to take out private health insurance or choose not to do so.

The Government expects this measure to encourage more people to take out private health insurance and, therefore, make private health insurance more affordable. However, it's not clear whether the changes, overall, will result in a better deal for consumers.

CHOICE is concerned that premiums will continue to increase regardless of the change, that the problem of 'out of pocket' expenses still exists and that the information provided to consumers to make decisions about private health insurance is still very complicated.



The Department of Health and Aged Care has set up an information helpline to assist people to understand how Lifetime Health Cover might affect them: 1800 676 296.



CHOICE is one of many consumer magazines from organisations worldwide that make up Consumers International. Get the lowdown on what's

happening with your fellow consumers around the world in World Consumer Snapshot.

■ Beware of killer jelly

It's amazing what can kill you if you're not careful — jelly is the latest thing on the hit list. According to Hong Kong's *Choice* magazine, a type of jelly that comes in tiny little cups has suffocated two young children in Taiwan, and nearly suffocated a child in Hong Kong. The jelly in the mini-cups (which you can find in some Asian grocery stores here) is made from konjac flour, a plant extract reputed to have medicinal qualities. It's very slippery and also much harder than regular jelly, and when it's sucked out of the cup, "it may rush its way into the throat causing suffocation".

■ Welcome to the club!

We'd like to extend a warm welcome to the Venezuelan consumer organisation, with the very first edition of their

magazine *Consumidores Venezolanos* hitting our desks this month.

This issue informs Venezuelan consumers about genetically modified food, the dangers of PVC plastic, exploitation of workers in certain sports shoe factories, the millennium bug, and how certain big fast food and agrochemical companies can censor unfavourable publicity.

Congratulations guys, and keep up the good work!

■ Daisy for dinner

Luxembourgian consumers demand to know exactly what they're eating and where it came from. This means that every cow born on a farm in Luxembourg is given an individual earmark number and its own passport, says Luxembourg's *de Konsument* magazine. The passport accompanies the animal from farm to abattoir, where the information — including the name of the abattoir, the individual ID number of the cow and the name and address of the farmer — is printed onto labels which are attached to the carcass or individual pieces of meat.

This allows consumers to trace their dinner right back to the individual animal and the farm it came from. What a lovely idea! You could even give the farmer a call and chat about Daisy's childhood, visit her place of birth and pore over the family albums.

● YOURletters

We're always pleased to publish subscribers letters with useful hints for other consumers

Redesign checkouts

While I completely concur with the sentiments in the *Greener shopping* article (November 1998 CHOICE, page 4), my own experience with one method of shopping green is made difficult by the way in which supermarket checkouts are designed.

For many years I've made use occasionally of a simple leather shopping bag which I bring from home. It enables me to refuse the plastic bags offered by retailers. However, while I find the leather shopper very convenient to use in small shops, many supermarkets do not offer this same ease of service.

The design of many supermarket checkouts means that staff immediately assume the customer wants plastic bags, which are set up on a frame behind the elevated scanner. When I try to use my own bag, I first have to request that I be passed the relevant items around the

scanner, at an uncomfortable angle, which invariably takes longer than the operator scanning and placing the item directly in the bag in front of them. This is awkward for me and no doubt frustrates those in the queue behind me.

Therefore, when I see canvas bags hanging at checkouts I think they're kidding themselves that anyone will buy and use them. If we are to really encourage the use of recyclable bags at supermarkets, then checkouts must be redesigned to accommodate this function.

Silvija Smits
Surry Hills, NSW

In praise of Master Painters

I am writing to tell you of my experience with Master Painters Australia. I believe that when someone has done a good job, they should receive the credit they deserve.

We had the exterior of our house painted last year. The painters, who were members

of [the trade association] Master Painters Australia, did a poor job. I wrote to MPA and sought the association's assistance. I have to confess that I thought that they would 'look after their own' and not really do anything about our problem. But I couldn't have been more wrong.

A representative came out to our home, noted the problems and asked the painter to fix them. The painter came out and fixed some of the problems, but not all of them. The MPA representative came out again and the painters half-fixed the problem again. Then the Victorian director of the MPA came out and instructed the painters again as to exactly how to tackle the problem. A third representative of the MPA came out to supervise the work while it was being performed. Finally, the Victorian director came again to check that the work had been done correctly. All this was done in a friendly spirit of co-operation.

In conducting themselves this way, the MPA not only increases its standing in the consumer's eye, it reinforces the value in dealing with a tradesperson who is a member of the relevant trade association.

Jennifer Batrouney
Glen Iris, Victoria

Inactive ingredients in medicines

As stated in your article *Food additives in medicines* in the September 1998 issue of CHOICE (page 6), some inactive ingredients in medicines must be declared on the label.

For prescription medicines, inactive ingredients may

alternatively be disclosed in the approved Product Information (the detailed technical information provided for health professionals) or the patient information document for the product.

In addition, prescription and pharmacist-only medicines must disclose *all* inactive ingredients in the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) for the product. The requirement to develop this information for patients was introduced in January 1993 for all new prescription products and in July 1995 for new pharmacist-only products.

So, for prescription and pharmacist-only medicines, a complete list of all inactive ingredients may be found in the CMI for the product. If a CMI isn't yet available for a particular medicine, consumers, or their doctor or pharmacist, can telephone the pharmaceutical company that markets the medicine and ask what inactive ingredients are included in the formulation.

Another source of this information is the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods, which is the list of all therapeutic products permitted to be supplied in Australia and maintained by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, a Division of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services.

We hope this additional information will enable consumers to obtain information about the inactive ingredients included in their medicines.

P R Clear, CEO,
Australian Pharmaceutical
Manufacturers Association
North Sydney, NSW

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Before and After Retirement



Peter Cerexhe

We want to hear from you — your experiences help our research and often let other readers know about scams and rip-offs. To thank you for writing to us, *Your Letters* awards a prize of a CHOICE book to the 'Letter of the month'. This month's winner, Jennifer Batrouney of Glen Iris, Victoria, receives *Before and After Retirement*, or any other book of her choice from Consumer Bookshelf (see the catalogue with this issue).

We're sorry we don't have the resources to answer all your letters personally, and in the magazine we may edit them or print only an extract. See

page 2 for how to reach us.

The mere thought of nearly 400 different additives in our food could be enough to make you jumpy. Do you really need to worry?



Food additives

IN BRIEF

■ Food additives are not, in general, a threat or a problem, and if we want the vast range and convenience of foods in our supermarkets they're essential. However, some people may react badly to some additives.

■ For this reason, labelling of processed foods should be extended to include *all* additives, even if they're present in very small amounts.

YOU'D BE HARD-PUSHED TO FIND A packaged food in the supermarket these days that doesn't have some additive in it. And if we expect a year-round choice of food, it can't be done without additives, which make foods last for longer.

Without preservatives, some processed meats are the perfect breeding ground for dangerous bacteria. Preservatives also stop food from deteriorating quickly, which keeps costs down — you don't need to throw food out before it's finished. For example, bread without calcium propionate would go mouldy very quickly, especially in hotter parts of Australia. Additives also make foods look and taste good, and so increase their marketability. For information on the various additives and what they do, see *Your guide to additives*, page 10.

But food additives are viewed with suspicion, almost fear, by many people, who see them as posing the greatest 'food threat'. However, the major hazards associated with food are ranked by some experts in the following order, from most to least important hazards:

- Microbial (food poisoning).
- Nutritional (such as eating too much fat).
- Environmental contamination (for example, mercury or lead in fish, pesticides or drug residues in meat).
- Naturally occurring substances in food, such as

solanine in potatoes or oxalates in spinach.

- Lastly, food additives and colours.

However, this doesn't mean we need have no concerns about additives. Some can cause adverse reactions in some people (see *Do you think you're intolerant?*, page 13, for more information) and the safety of some is questionable (see *How do we know they're safe?*, above right).

Conned by additives

Sometimes the use of additives is just a consumer con. For example, the NSW health department once prosecuted a number of sandwich shop owners for adding red colouring to cheap pale pink salmon to sell it as the more expensive red salmon. Sulphur dioxide is sometimes illegally added to mince to make it look and smell fresh when it's really past its best.

Manufacturers often add thickeners to food to bulk it up and hold a lot of added water (for example, baby foods) — all quite legal, as is the addition of mineral salts to bacon, for example, to help the bacon hold in added water and so weigh more. Often we're paying for water or thickeners without knowing it.

Intolerance to additives

Of the nearly 400 permitted additives in Australia, roughly 50 of them have been implicated in causing

adverse reactions (for a list of some of them, see page 11).

Reactions include itchy skin rash, irritable bowel syndrome, respiratory problems including asthma, and neurobehavioural symptoms such as headache, migraine, irritability and hyperactivity.

Some naturally occurring substances can cause just as many problems as food additives. These include salicylates (often found in acidic fruit), amines (in cheese and chocolate, among other foods) and glutamates (found in soy sauce and mushrooms, for example).

Trying to assess the extent of the problem of intolerance can be difficult. It's intrinsically difficult to perform reliable scientific studies of people's eating habits, and much of the 'evidence' is anecdotal.

On the one hand some health professionals think food additives aren't a problem, and that perception has run far ahead of the facts. On the other hand, some mothers are convinced their children's problems are caused by food additives. Somewhere in the middle, health professionals in allergy clinics are certain that some food additives can have an adverse effect: they see the unlucky group with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), skin problems or respiratory problems, for example, who often respond well to diets that exclude certain additives. They also suspect a few people in the general population suffer as a result of additives even if they don't seek treatment.

■ Behavioural problems

In the 1970s, Dr Ben Feingold in the US claimed that a diet free of synthetic colourings, preservatives and naturally occurring salicylates (in plant foods, including most fruits) improved behaviour in 30–50% of hyperactive children.

This has been exhaustively tested, with very mixed results — some studies have concluded that a Feingold-type diet has little effect on children's behaviour, while others claim a huge success (in some studies up to 75% of children have seemed to respond favourably to elimination diets).

While we might not know the true scale of the problem, evidence does suggest that some additives affect behaviour in a small number of children. But it's important to stress that behavioural problems are often multi-factorial, with food additives being just one of the contributing factors. For an example of how food additives can affect someone's life, see *Fewer additives, more peace and quiet*, right.

■ Breathing problems

Some asthmatics are sensitive to sulphur dioxide (220), which can be released by all the sulphite preservatives (220–228). A small number of non-asthmatics can be sensitive too. The best advice for them is to avoid foods with sulphur dioxide in them

altogether. While this is quite easy with labelled packaged foods, it isn't for unpackaged foods such as sausages or for foods that have had sulphur dioxide illegally added to them, such as mince.

There's also some evidence that monosodium glutamate (MSG) can produce asthma-like symptoms (see *Is MSG a dirty word?*, page 12).

How do we know they're safe?

The bottom line is that often we don't know for certain that an additive is safe, but we've come a long way in terms of the safety of food additives compared to when we first started using them in earnest after the industrial revolution. For example, lead chromate was used to colour lollies.

Sometimes additives are approved for use based on the best available evidence at the time, only to be later restricted or prohibited based on more current data. And sometimes more current data is not

What are food additives?

A food additive is not a food in itself, and it's not classed as an ingredient in foods. Instead, it's defined as any substance that's added to food to achieve a technological function — such as preserving or altering taste, texture or colour.

FEWER ADDITIVES. MORE PEACE AND QUIET

Sue and Howard Dengate's daughter Rebecca gave them a hard time from the day she was born. She would neither fall nor stay asleep easily, and her waking behaviour was always full-on. While doctors insisted food wasn't affecting her behaviour, the Dengates gradually came to think differently.

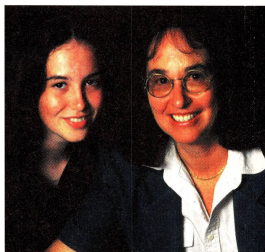
Finally they tried Rebecca on the elimination diet recommended by the Dietitians' Association, and she became a different person — she stopped arguing and started sleeping, eating, making friends and enjoying and being successful at school, and the Dengates could relax and enjoy family life.

That was five years ago. Rebecca is now at high school and still has to maintain her diet of what they call 'failsafe' foods. These aren't necessarily the 'healthy' foods you'd expect — Sue says some of these have caused the biggest problems because they're eaten so often and you probably don't suspect they have additives in them that would cause such reactions. For example, when Rebecca eats bread containing the preservative calcium propionate, she becomes tired, forgetful and can't concentrate.

Sometimes the amount of an additive is so small it doesn't have to be declared on a food's label, yet it can still provoke a reaction in Rebecca. Sue came across this with a butter softened with canola oil that she later found out contained the antioxidant BHA. See *Labels don't always help*, page 13, for more on this.

Other additives that affect Rebecca include artificial food colours, the natural food colour annatto, preservatives (benzoates, sulphites, nitrates and nitrites, propionates), antioxidants, MSG, artificial flavours and salicylates. They mainly cause irritability and sleep disturbance, though the sulphites trigger asthma.

If you think your child is affected by additives, says Sue, you have to look very carefully at what's in everything you eat — and probably seek professional help, as they did — in order to find out where the problems lie.



Technological need — or just marketing?

According to ANZFA's standard for food additives, "additives can only be added to food in order to achieve an identified technological function ...". But you can find a technological function for almost any additive — to find a technological need would greatly limit the use of additives.

In our view, technological need is where use of a particular additive will reduce wastage or the risk of illness from unsafe food, and where there is no other approved additive or process capable of performing the same function.

In theory, this rules out additives used to modify the appearance, flavour or texture of a product — while they perform a technological function, there is no need for them. The line between technological and marketing need is at times very blurred — a colour-free icy pole or lollipop may not look too exciting to a child, so colour is added to liven it up — but for technological or marketing reasons?

Some processed foods simply wouldn't exist without additives — there are 20 listed on this label.

INGREDIENTS: Sugar, Flour, Egg, Vegetable Oil, Baking Powder, Golden Syrup, Glucose Syrup, Salt, Humectant (420), Emulsifiers (322, 433, 471, 475), Food Acid (296, 330, 575), Preservative (202, 211, 281), Gelatine, Non-Fat Milk Solids, Whey Powder, Flavours, Colours (133, 150, 151, 155, 160[a]), Vegetable Gums (412, 415), Antioxidants (304, 306), Water Added.

available and when earlier studies — as far back as the 1970s — are questioned (eg aspartame), the safety is more uncertain.

In the early 1990s in Australia the red colour erythrosine (127) was banned from use in all foods except cocktail and glace cherries because of its effect on the thyroid gland at high doses. And the yellow colour canthaxanthin (161g) was banned here because of a link with the build-up of crystalline deposits in the retina of the eye.

Some artificial sweeteners have been connected with cancers in laboratory animals — opinions are often divided. We'll be taking a closer look at the safety concerns with sweeteners in an article in CHOICE later this year.

The additives nitrites and nitrates can be converted to cancer-causing nitrosamines in the stomach, which can increase the risk of gastric cancer. However, without the use of nitrites and nitrates, the growth of toxic micro-organisms in some processed meats could kill people who eat these foods. The benefit of adding them far outweighs the risk if this kind of food is still to be sold.

Another additive of concern is the antioxidant BHA, which is often added to salad dressings, for example. Though it can cause cancer in rats in large doses, it hasn't had the same effect in studies on dogs. It's still considered safe at the low level of use permitted.

If there's any query about an additive's safety, the only way to answer it is by scientific studies. Regulators in different countries may accept or reject its use in processed foods in the meantime, based on their opinions of the strength of the current evidence — and, no doubt, the strength of the various lobby groups for or against its use.

(continued on page 12)



Your guide to additives

Additives are classed according to their function, and each additive must be listed on the food label first by its class, and then, except for flavours, either by its name or code number.

Basically, additives have four main purposes:

- To keep food safe: preservatives.
- For convenience: for example, additives give us a whole range of sauces, toppings, dairy desserts, salad dressings, instant cake mixes, etc, to choose from.
- Cosmetic: making products appealing with colours, textures and flavours. Cosmetic modifications can also be used to deceive (see *Conned by additives*, page 8).
- Nutritional modification: for example, artificial sweeteners, fat replacers.

The main groups of additives and their functions are listed below:

■ **Colours** (which have code numbers in the 100 range) can make food look more appealing and replace colour lost in processing. Those allowed include some naturally derived colours (mainly plant extracts), their chemically identical synthetic ones and purely artificial colours such as tartrazine (102). Some of the artificial colours have a bad reputation. For more on this see *Behavioural problems*, page 9.

■ **Preservatives** (which have code numbers in the 200 range) make foods last longer by controlling the growth of bacteria, moulds and yeasts. For example, sorbic acid (200) can be added to fruit drinks, fresh fruit salad and bread. Sulphur dioxide (220) is often added to wine, beer, dried fruits and sausages.

Nitrates and nitrites are often used as curing agents and preservatives in processed meats — they give the pink colour to ham and bacon (see this page, left, for more on them).

■ **Antioxidants** (which have code numbers in the 300 range) help food last longer by stopping fats and oils from going off, and preventing colour and flavour changes. For example, ascorbic acid (300) is often added to cut fruit to stop it going brown when exposed to air.

■ **Emulsifiers** (with code numbers mainly in the 400 range) and **stabilisers** (often the same as emulsifiers, but also vegetable gums, with code numbers mainly in the 400 range). Emulsifiers (such as lecithin, 322) help mix together foods that would normally separate, like oil and water in margarine or mayonnaise, while stabilisers stop them from separating again.

■ **Thickeners** (including vegetable gums, with code numbers mainly in the 400 range, and modified starches with code numbers in the 1000 range) are often used to make food seem smoother or creamier. They also allow more water to be added to a product — several starches

and vegetable gums listed in an ingredient list can mean a high water content. Thickeners and gelling agents can also make fruit-pie fillings appear more fruity.

■ **Flavour enhancers** (with code numbers mainly in the 600 range) have little or no flavour themselves but are often used in savoury foods, snacks, sauces and meat products to boost either their existing flavour or any artificial flavours added. Monosodium glutamate (621) is probably the best known. For more on this see *Is MSG a dirty word?*, page 12.

■ **Sweeteners** — Intense sweeteners (with code numbers in the 900 range) such as saccharin, aspartame and cyclamate are much sweeter than sugar. They're often used in diet and low-sugar foods. If a food contains an artificial sweetening substance the label has to say 'artificially sweetened', as well as listing the sweetener in the ingredients. There's been some controversy about the safety of some intense sweeteners, with the jury still out on some of them.

Bulk sweeteners, such as sorbitol (420), are similar in sweetness to sugar and are used in some confectionery, bakery and diabetic foods.

■ **Flavourings** (with no code numbers) are used to add new flavours, replace ones lost during processing and to give the food a consistent flavour. Most are mixtures of many chemicals and it's difficult to analyse food for them, which is one reason they don't have to be listed separately on labels.

There are many other types of additive, such as anti-caking agents, which prevent food particles from sticking together or make sure products like salt flow freely; bleaching agents, used to whiten flour, for example; humectants, which prevent food from drying out; food acids, which among other roles add a tart taste to food and help jam to set; and mineral salts, which can act as firming agents.

Food additives that can cause problems

■ **Artificial colours:** Tartrazine (102), Yellow 2G (107), Sunset yellow FCF (110), Carmoisine (122), Amaranth (123), Ponceau 4R (124), Erythrosine (127) — allowed only for use in maraschino (cocktail) and glacé cherries, Allura red AC (129), Brilliant blue FCF (133), Green S (142), Brilliant black BN (151).

Typically found in: Cordials, lollies, cakes, biscuits, packet mixes (such as



The colourings and preservatives in soft drinks, lollies and snack foods are often blamed for some children's bad behaviour, while sulphur dioxide added to wine can be a problem if you have asthma.

cheesecake mixes), packet soup, mint jelly, soft drinks.

■ **Natural colours:** Annatto (160 b).

Typically found in: Margarine, Cheshire cheese, smoked fish, cakes.

■ **Preservatives:**

Benzoates (210–213): Typically found in fruit juice, fruit drinks, cordial, soft drink, toppings, low-joule jam.

Nitrites (249, 250) and **nitrites** (251, 252): Typically found in processed meats like ham and corned beef.

Propionic acids (280–283): Typically found in bread and bread products.

Sorbates (200–203): Typically found in bread and bread products, cheese and processed cheese, fresh fruit salad, fruit juice, fruit drink, cordials, yoghurt, pickled onions.

Sulphites (220–228): Typically found in fruit juice, fruit drinks, cordial, wine, dried fruit, sausages, pickles.

■ **Antioxidants:**

Butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA) (320): Typically found in margarine and spreads, vegetable oil, walnut and pecan nut kernels, instant mashed potato.

Butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT) (321): Its use is limited to walnut and pecan kernels. ANZFA is proposing to allow it to be added to chewing and bubble gum — not a good idea seeing as there are safety concerns hanging over it.

Gallates (310–312): Typically found in margarine and spreads, vegetable oil, salad oil.

Others (315–319): Typically found in beer, breakfast cereals, flour.

■ **Flavour enhancers:**

Glutamates (621–625): Found in many tasty foods like packet and quick soups, flavoured noodles, sauces, savoury snacks.

Baby foods often contain thickeners which allow a lot of water to be added, bulking up the contents — thickener is the second largest ingredient in this baby food.



Natural, artificial or nature-identical?

Artificial or synthetic additives may have technical advantages over natural ones. They can be more stable, and there are more to choose from. Natural additives, from sources like plants, aren't necessarily safer, and their chemical make-up is also more likely to vary. Artificial copies of natural additives are called 'nature-identical' — sounds better for marketing than 'artificial'!

How are additives regulated?

The Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA) regulates the use of food additives in Australia and New Zealand, and all permitted additives have been subjected to extensive safety evaluation by a large number of relevant bodies.

When applying to use a new additive, a manufacturer must provide evidence to ANZFA of its safety as well as there being a technological function for it (for more on this see *Technological need — or just marketing?*, page 10).

Evidence for safety is provided in the form of toxicological tests, which establish the amount of the additive likely to be harmful to humans. The tests involve animals, the maximum dose of the additive, which gives no observable adverse effect each day

over the animals' lifetime is established and about 100 times less than this figure becomes the acceptable daily intake (ADI) for humans.

However, safety assessments are done on individual additives, not on combinations of additives (which is how they're consumed in real life). Nobody knows the long-term effects of eating a cocktail of different additives.

Are we likely to eat too many?

ANZFA recently reviewed most of the food additives allowed here to see if dietary exposure to them exceeds the ADI. Using national dietary surveys to estimate how much of the different kinds of food people eat, most additives got the all-clear, but some — sulphites, nitrites, cyclamates, saccharin and propylene glycol (a humectant added to the surface of

Is MSG a dirty word?

Probably one of the most maligned food additives is monosodium glutamate (MSG). It's best known in association with 'Chinese restaurant syndrome', which includes symptoms such as numbness in the back of the neck radiating to the arms and back, tightness and tingling of the face, as well as tightness of the chest, nausea and palpitations. It's also been suggested that MSG can be responsible for more severe reactions, such as asthma or cardiac arrhythmia, that could be life-threatening, as well as brain lesions and neurotoxicity.

MSG has been continually examined, most recently by the Life Sciences Research Office at the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, at the request of the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This study

concluded that there's evidence of a small group of otherwise healthy individuals who may respond to large doses of MSG under certain circumstances, and that there may be a small group of asthmatics who do the same. However, there's no evidence that MSG produces neurotoxic effects in humans, and only very occasionally are reactions to it life-threatening.

In 1991, the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPAH) allergy clinic in Sydney looked at data for 1105 people who had attended the clinic and undergone challenge diets with various food substances, including MSG. They found that 44% reacted to MSG, though no-one was sensitive to MSG alone. The most common additional substances provoking reactions in MSG-sensitive people were salicylates (73%) and amines (60%). These are often found in acidic fruit (salicylates) or cheese and chocolate (amines) — quite common foods. So MSG-sensitive people often experience problems with meals where large amounts of amines, salicylates and MSG are eaten in combination — for example, Asian, Lebanese or Italian meals, pizzas and certain fast foods.

People attending an allergy clinic for one reason or another (common reasons for attending an allergy clinic include itchy skin, irritable bowel syndrome, migraine or asthma) are clearly a self-selected group, and may be unrepresentative of the population at large. However, results of food challenge tests in a small number of 'healthy' people led specialists at the RPAH allergy clinic to conclude that a minor degree of intolerance to MSG and other food substances is likely to be quite common in the wider community.

People who believe they're sensitive to MSG should be aware that other ingredients such as natural flavourings and hydrolysed vegetable protein also contain glutamate. Interestingly, foods like tomatoes and parmesan cheese contain glutamate that occurs naturally to these foods.



fruit and vegetables to keep them from drying out) — have been identified as having the potential to exceed the ADI for either adults or schoolchildren.

ANZFA is looking at strategies to deal with these, such as lowering the allowed limit in foods or reducing the number of foods they're allowed to be added to.

New standard — more additives

The whole food additive standard is being reviewed at the moment and the new standard is likely to be out by the end of the year.

CHOICE is concerned about some aspects of the new standard, particularly because many additives that were formerly restricted will now be approved for use in a much larger range of foods, more or less at the manufacturer's discretion.

These additives don't have any limit placed on them because they're not considered to pose any risk. Manufacturers will be allowed to include them according to 'good manufacturing practice' (GMP) guidelines: that is, the quantity should be limited to the lowest level necessary to accomplish a desired technological effect (see *Technological need — or just marketing*, page 10). But how do you define that 'necessary level' when, for example, adding a gelling agent to a fruit-pie filling to make it look like there's more fruit — when will the manufacturer stop? Probably not while it saves them money.

Labels don't always help

You can usually avoid any additives you want to in packaged foods — with a few exceptions (see below), they have to be listed on the label, first by the class name and then by the name of the additive or its code number (except for flavours). But this means that you have to know the code numbers of the additives you want to avoid. And the fact that *either* the code number or the name is listed means it can be hard to compare which additives are in different products.

In some instances additives don't have to be listed at all — for example, if an additive's present in an ingredient and that ingredient makes up less than 10% of the complete food product. This can be a big problem for those who want to avoid certain additives — how can you do this if you don't know they're there? It means, for example, that a biscuit or cracker may have small amounts of an antioxidant in it, because of the presence of vegetable oil, but it won't be listed if the vegetable oil is less than 10%. Little amounts of hidden additives can add up, becoming significant for sensitive people (see *Fewer additives, more peace and quiet*, page 9).

Processing aids also don't have to be listed in the ingredients, even though traces may be present in

Do you think you're intolerant?

If you think you're intolerant to some food additives, it's important not to try to self-diagnose or treat yourself. It's a complicated area and you may incorrectly pick on food substances and end up restricting your diet unnecessarily.

For information on where to go for advice, the following are good starting points:

■ **Dietitians** — To find a dietitian, contact your local hospital or community health centre.

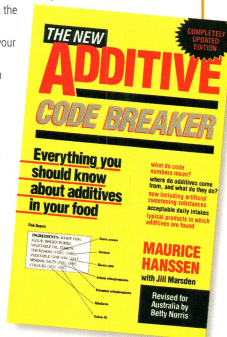
Dietitians in private practice are also listed in the Yellow Pages. You can get a list of accredited practising dietitians in your area from the APD hotline of the Dietitians Association of Australia, 1800 812 942;

1/8 Phipps Close, Deakin ACT 2600; fax (02) 6282 9888; email daacanb@hcn.net.au

■ **Doctors** — you can ask your doctor to refer you to an allergy specialist or to an allergy clinic at a major teaching hospital.

■ The RPAH allergy clinic in Sydney has produced the book *Friendly Food*, which gives an excellent overview of allergies and intolerances, as well as providing recipes prepared with 'friendly' foods. It's available from all good bookstores.

If you're keen to avoid some additives, you can carry the *New Additive Code Breaker* with you when you're shopping. See the book catalogue included with this issue of CHOICE to order a copy.



the food. Examples include various silicates that stop ingredient particles from sticking together, or sodium metabisulphite (223) as a dough conditioner.

Making things even more difficult, foods that are sold unpackaged, like deli meats, don't have any labelling requirements, so you've no way of knowing if they've got nitrites in them, for example.

Our verdict

Food additives aren't a problem for the majority of people and they have some advantages:

■ Additives help ensure foods are safe from the growth of harmful bacteria (for example, nitrites in processed meats prevent the growth of the potentially deadly bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*).

■ Supermarket shelves are stocked year-round with an enormous range of foods.

However, there are good reasons why the use of additives needs to be tightly regulated:

■ Some of the additives that can cause health problems appear to be added largely to gain a marketing advantage.

■ You sometimes can't tell what additives are in foods because of inadequate labelling requirements, making it hard to avoid them if you prefer to. Labels should include all additives, whatever their quantity. □

*Do you have to pay a fortune
for a pantyhose that's sheer,
smooth and silky and also lasts
through a few wearings?
We put more than 140 pairs
through a user trial to
find out.*



Pantyhose

IN BRIEF

- Many of the cheaper brands of pantyhose scored considerably worse for both appearance and durability. But you don't have to pay top dollars for good-looking and well-fitting pantyhose that last reasonably well. One of the top-performing brands in our trial sells for around \$7.
- Sadly for consumers, pantyhose aren't made to last long. None of the brands we tested lasted five days for all trialists.
- Fit was a major concern. Our trialists had problems with the fit of either the body or leg length or the waistband in 40% of the pantyhose.

PANTYHOSE ARE ONE OF THE FEW items of clothing you can't try on before buying. So we decided to put them on trial again — after a 13-year absence in CHOICE — to help you find the brand that fits and looks the best, lasts reasonably well and doesn't cost a fortune.

The more things change ...

Over the years since pantyhose were first introduced in Australia in the 1960s, much has changed in the hosiery market — the technology, the fibres used, the variety available in the shops and their cost.

While you can still get a pair for less than a dollar in supermarkets, in department stores and specialist retail outlets you can expect to pay anything up to \$90 for a pair of imported pantyhose.

One of the most important changes to the Australian hosiery market is the use of elastane in the fibre, probably better known as Lycra, the registered trademark for DuPont's elastane fibre. Elastane is a rubber-like synthetic fibre that's added to nylon hosiery to provide better comfort, fit, appearance

and durability. According to Australian hosiery manufacturer Kolotex, elastane makes "the saggy knees and baggy ankles of nylon hosiery a thing of the past" and, if carefully handled, makes it last longer.

Elastane can indeed improve the durability of pantyhose, as they're less likely to catch because of their close fit. In our trial, most brands contained elastane. The two that didn't came among the last for durability. That's not to say, however, that pantyhose with elastane automatically last longer than those without.

Interestingly, the VOODOO Naked pantyhose, which scored worst of all for durability — even worse than the two made of 100% nylon — contains the highest amount of elastane of those we trialled — 31%, but at 10 denier, it's also the sheerest of the lot. Denier is a scale that indicates the fineness of the yarn used in hosiery (silk, nylon, etc). The lower the number, the sheerer the fabric. The higher the number, the thicker and more opaque the fabric, and (generally speaking) the more durable.

The SCHIAPARELLI Cristella, which came top for durability and equal first overall, shows that the combination of a higher denier (30) and higher elastane content (21%) can help make the pantyhose fit better and last longer.

... the more they stay the same

While there have been some interesting innovations in the hosiery market over the decades, some things have unfortunately remained the same since we first reported on pantyhose — poor quality control and less than perfect fit.

The trial

Over six weeks from February to April this year, 25 women of different ages and sizes who regularly wear pantyhose at work, trialled more than 140 pairs for us. We supplied the pantyhose in clear bags so they couldn't identify the brands, and they assessed and compared their appearance, comfort and durability.

We chose 12 brands of black, sheer pantyhose that ranged in price from 90 cents to \$20 a pair and represent three price segments: expensive (over \$10), medium (\$6–10) and cheap (under \$6).



Too long, short, loose, tight

We gave our trialists pantyhose that should have fitted their height and weight according to the charts printed on the packets. When their dimensions fell near the border between two sizes, we chose the larger one, as is generally recommended. So in theory the pantyhose should have fitted. However, of all the pantyhose we trialled, 40% were considered to have one or more things wrong with the fit — either the legs or the body were too long or too short, or the waistband too loose or too tight.

Making pantyhose that fit the wearer — or labelling the sizes correctly — seems to be a difficult task. We criticised the poor fit of pantyhose in our reports in the early 1970s and again in the mid 1980s, although by then it had become mandatory for manufacturers to print a height/weight sizing chart on the packaging.

While that chart may be helpful to get a rough idea of the size that fits you, our trial has shown — and you've probably experienced this too — that you can't rely on it to find the perfect fit. Use the manufacturer's size chart as a guide and when you've found a brand you like *and* it fits, stick with it.

Well-fitting pantyhose aren't just more comfortable but also last longer. If they're too loose, they'll catch and snag more easily than a close-fitting pair. And if they're too tight, they're more likely to form holes or split at the seams.

WHAT TO BUY

SCHIAPARELLI Cristella, matte sheen	\$12.50
KAYSER Silken sheers, regular brief	\$6.95
REDE Redesetelle, sheer to waist bright pantyhose	\$17.95
ITALIA Sheer to waist	\$8.95
RAZZAMATAZZ Essence, silky sheer pantyhose	\$4.97

Snags and ladders

A relatively high percentage of pantyhose (12%) had flaws when the trialists first put them on. These included threads, ladders, holes, pulls, snags, knots or a streaky look as if the dye had run out.

Of course, you have to handle delicate hosiery with utmost care so you don't tear it or pull a thread with your jewellery, fingernails or rough skin. But the quality problems our trialists found were spotted when they first put them on. Both cheap and expensive brands suffered in this respect; in fact, only a third of the brands tested had no problems when first put on (KAYSER, RAZZAMATAZZ, SHOUT and TARGET).

This isn't the first time we've found flaws in brand-new hosiery, nor are we the only ones to find them. When we last tested them in 1986, nearly half were damaged when we opened the packets, and during a recent pantyhose test by our sister organisation in the US, at least one of the three samples of each pair tested had a flaw when it emerged from the package.

It's a sign of poor quality control in the hosiery industry, and you as the consumer shouldn't have to pay for it. So keep the receipt and packaging until you've inspected the pantyhose. If you discover a manufacturing fault on opening, take it back to the retailer as soon as possible. It's their responsibility to replace faulty goods or refund your money. If you haven't kept the receipt and the retailer refuses to deal with the problem, contact the manufacturer.

PROFILES

Profiles are of all the pantyhose trialled, in rank order. Prices shown are based on checks in Sydney and Melbourne in May 1999.

SCHIAPARELLI Cristella, matte sheen

Target price: \$12.50
Distributor: Hilton Hosiery.
Country of origin: Italy.
Gusset: Cotton blend.
Toe: Reinforced.
Brief: Sheer to waist.

Good points

- Best overall.
- Best for durability.
- Equal second-best for appearance.

Bad points

- Expensive.
- More than half the trialists had problems with the fit; the legs in particular were considered too short, though the sizes were chosen based on the manufacturer's recommendations.

Trialists' comments: Smooth, lasting.
"Very easy to wear, a good-quality pair — the first brand I wore for five days without any problems."

KAYSER Silken sheers, regular brief

BEST BUY

Target price: \$6.95
Country of origin: Australia.
Manufacturer: Hilton Hosiery.
Gusset: Cotton blend.
Toe: Lightly reinforced.
Brief: Reinforced.

Good points

- Second-best overall.
- Best for appearance and comfort.
- Good durability.

Bad points

- None in particular.

Trialists' comments: Smooth, sheer.
"A really nice fit and a lovely feel — sheer and silky."



PANTYHOSE

REDE Redesetelle, sheer to waist, bright pantyhose

Target price: \$17.95
Distributor: Jet International.
Country of origin: Italy.
Gusset: Nylon/elastane.
Toe: Reinforced.
Brief: Sheer to waist.

Good points

- Second-best for appearance and durability.
- Good overall and comfort scores.

Bad points

- Expensive.
- Fit was a problem for nearly half the trialists, though the sizes were chosen based on the manufacturer's recommendations.

Trialists' comments: Smooth, sheer and silky.

"Nice feel. Wide waistband very comfortable. This particular pair was too long for me, but if the size was correct, I'd be happy to purchase it."

ITALIA Sheer to waist

Target price: \$8.95
Distributor: Kmart.
Country of origin: Italy.
Gusset: Cotton blend.
Toe: Reinforced.
Brief: Sheer to waist.

Good points

- Equal second-best for appearance.
- Good for comfort.

Bad points

- Fit was a problem for more than a third of the trialists, though the sizes were chosen based on the manufacturer's recommendations.

Trialists' comments: Beautifully sheer. Nice and smooth.

"I liked the sheer appearance of these."

RAZZAMATAZZ Essence, silky sheer pantyhose

Target price: \$4.97
Manufacturer: Hilton Hosier.
Country of origin: Australia.
Gusset: Cotton blend.
Toe: Reinforced.
Brief: Reinforced.



Good points

- Good for comfort.
- Good appearance.
- Inexpensive.

Bad points

- More than a third of the trialists had problems with the fit — the body and legs were too long for some, though the sizes were chosen based on the manufacturer's recommendations.

Trialists' comments: Sheer, smooth, sagging, loose.

"I liked them very much — control brief and reinforced toe were great."

DONNA KARAN Just sheer hosiery

Target price: \$20.00
Distributor: Hilton Hosier.
Country of origin: US.
Gusset: Cotton blend.
Toe: Sheer.
Brief: Sheer to waist.

Good points

- Good appearance.
- Good durability.

Bad points

- Very expensive.
- More than half the trialists had various problems with the fit, though the sizes were chosen based on the manufacturer's recommendations.

Trialists' comments: Smooth.

"They looked fine and felt OK on the first day, but they started to look worse with every wear."

LEVANTE Eclipse, satin-matte sheer pantyhose

Target price: \$8.95
Distributor: Levante Hosier.
Country of origin: Italy.
Gusset: Nylon/elastane.
Toe: Reinforced.
Brief: Reinforced.

Good points

- Good appearance.

Bad points

- Relatively low durability.
- More than a third of the trialists had problems with the fit; the body length in particular was considered too long for some, though the sizes were chosen based on the manufacturer's recommendations.

Trialists' comments: Smooth, even texture.

"Even weave creates a nice sheer look."

TARGET Sheer to waist pantyhose

Target price: \$6.75
Distributor: Target.
Country of origin: Australia.
Gusset: Cotton blend.
Toe: Reinforced.
Brief: Sheer to waist.

Good points

- Reasonably cheap.

Bad points

- Fit was a problem for a third of the trialists — the legs were too short for some, though the sizes were chosen based on the manufacturer's recommendations.

Trialists' comments: Silky look, comfortable gusset, tight fit.
 "I like the silky look of these pantyhose."

KICKS Sheer to waist pantyhose with Lycra

Target price: \$1.94
Manufacturer: Kolotex.
Country of origin: Australia.
Gusset: Cotton blend.
Toe: Reinforced.
Brief: Sheer to waist.

Good points

- Very inexpensive.

Bad points

- Low durability.
- Fit was a problem for nearly a third of the trialists, though the sizes were chosen based on the manufacturer's recommendations.

Trialists' comments: Snags, pulls.
 "They were quite comfortable when I was standing, sitting or driving, but the first time I bent down the crotch seam split."

NO FRILLS 3 Pairs panty hose sheer to waist

Target price: \$2.69 for a packet of three.

Distributor: Franklins.

Country of origin: Australia.

Gusset: None.

Toe: Reinforced.

Brief: Sheer to waist.

Good points

- The cheapest pantyhose in the test.

Bad points

- Worst for appearance.
- Equal worst for comfort.
- Low durability score.
- No elastane content, which is reflected in its low scores.
- Fit was a problem for nearly a third of the trialists; the body and

legs were too long for some, though the sizes were chosen based on the manufacturer's recommendations.

Trialists' comments: Snags, pulls, rough feel.

"No support, felt rough and loose."

VOODOO Naked, sheer to waist pantyhose

Target price: \$9.95

Manufacturer: Kolotex.

Country of origin: Australia.

Gusset: Cotton blend.

Toe: Lightly reinforced.

Brief: Sheer to waist.

Good points

- None in particular.

Bad points

- Worst for durability.
- Second-worst overall.

- Relatively expensive, considering its low ratings.

Trialists' comments: Too fine, flimsy, smooth.

"They were too weak and my finger went through them too easily — beautiful smooth texture and feel on the legs, though."

SHOUT Sheer to waist

Target price: \$1.32

Manufacturer: Kolotex.

Country of Origin: Thailand (unless stated otherwise on the pack).

Gusset: None.

Toe: Lightly reinforced.

Brief: Sheer to waist.

Good points

- Very inexpensive.

Bad points

- Worst overall.
- Very low scores for comfort, durability and appearance.
- No elastane content, which is reflected in its low scores.
- More than half the trialists had problems with the fit — the body and legs were too long, though the sizes were chosen based on the manufacturer's recommendations.

Trialists' comments: Cheap.

"They're very grainy and they really don't look very nice. They're really loose and quite uncomfortable — the body reached up to my armpits by the second day."

How they rated

How they rated	1	2		3	4	5	6
Brand (in rank order)	Denier	Elastane (%)	Price (\$)*	Appearance score (%)	Comfort score (%)	Durability score (%)	Overall score (%)
SCHIAPELLI Cristella matte sheer	30	21	12.50	81	66	80	77
KAYSER Silken sheers regular brief	15	15	6.95	85	82	66	75
REDE Redesetelle, sheer to waist bright pantyhose	20	10	17.95	81	76	68	73
ITALIA Sheer to waist	15	15	8.95	81	78	65	72
RAZZAMATAZZ Essence silky sheer pantyhose	15	7	4.97	77	76	63	70
DONNA KARAN Just sheer hosiery	12	17	20.00	76	66	67	69
LEVANTE Eclipse satin-matte sheer pantyhose	15	16	8.95	76	74	60	68
TARGET Sheer to waist pantyhose	15	15	6.75	75	69	63	68
KICKS Sheer to waist pantihose with Lycra	15	10	1.94	62	67	52	58
NO FRILLS 3 Pairs pantyhose sheer to waist	18	(A)	2.69 (B)	52	62	55	56
VOODOO Naked sheer to waist pantihose	10	31	9.95	64	65	35	50
SHOUT Sheer to waist	15	(A)	1.32	57	62	38	49

* Prices are a good target to aim for, based on checks in Sydney and Melbourne in May 1999.

(A) 100% nylon.

(B) For a packet of three.

(rubber-like) synthetic fibre, added for superior comfort, fit, appearance and durability. Elastane fibre is also known as Lycra (the registered DuPont trademark) or as Spandex in the US.

they wore them last. Both ratings contributed equally to the comfort score.

3 Appearance score

Our trialists rated the appearance of the pantyhose when they first put them on and when they wore them for the last time, which could have been after one to five days' wear, depending on how long the pantyhose lasted. Both ratings contributed equally to the appearance score.

4 Comfort score

The trialists also rated the comfort of the pantyhose when they first put them on and when

5 Durability score

This score is based on the number of days (out of five) a pantyhose lasted on average. For example, a score of 60% indicates that the pantyhose was worn for an average of three days. There was no brand all trialists could wear for the full five days of the trial.

6 Overall score

Based on consumer comments, we consider durability the most important factor in pantyhose wear, so it contributes 50% to the overall score. Appearance and comfort contribute 25% each.

1 Denier

Denier is a scale that indicates the fineness of the yarn used in hosiery (silk, nylon, etc.). The lower the number, the sheerer the fabric and, in general, the more fragile. The higher the number, the thicker and more opaque the fabric, and (generally speaking) the more durable.

2 Elastane content

Pantyhose are made primarily from nylon. Many also contain elastane, an elastomeric



Smart keys

Smart keys are being hailed as a breakthrough in the fight against car theft, but you can't simply pop down to the nearest hardware store for a spare.

IN BRIEF

- Smart keys are electronically coded so your car's computer can recognise them.
- Motoring organisations say they're very effective against theft.
- Don't lose your smart key — getting a spare is expensive and time-consuming.

SMART KEYS ARE THE LATEST IN VEHICLE security and they come with an increasing number of new cars. They haven't been around long enough to provide conclusive evidence, but motoring organisations believe they're having a dramatic effect on theft rates.

For example, the Honda Civic used to be on the NRMA list of the 10 most commonly stolen cars, costing it around \$1.5m a year, until smart-key technology was introduced in the 1995-96 model. The NRMA is aware of "very few thefts since" and would like to see smart-key technology in all new cars. The good news for consumers is that any decline in your car's theft rates should be reflected in lower insurance premiums.

What are smart keys?

Smart keys look and work like ordinary keys, but they're also electronically coded with an identifying number that can be recognised by your car's computer. It won't accept any key that doesn't have the



unique code number for your car. Using an uncoded copy of the key, you'll be able to open the car door, listen to the radio and maybe even start the car (depending on the system). But you won't be able to drive away: the computer will either prevent the engine from starting or make it cut out after a few seconds.

You may not be aware that you're using a smart key because you don't have to activate it — it communicates its code number to your car without you being aware of it.

How they work

A small electronic chip called a transponder, which holds the code number, is usually embedded in the key's plastic head (or it can hang separately from the keyring alongside the key). The transponder responds with its code number to a radio signal from your car's computer. The transponders used for smart keys are powered by the car's signal, so the key doesn't need batteries.

There's one big drawback: it can be time-consuming and expensive to get spare keys. Special blanks have to be ordered, sometimes from overseas. You then take your car, your current keys and the new key to the dealership for coding. Coding is likely to take around an hour.

Make sure you take all existing keys with you: some systems allocate a new code number rather than coding the new key to match the old number. Any keys not recoded will no longer work.

The cost of blanks and coding varies enormously, depending on the make of car and the dealership, so it's worth shopping around — but you'll be lucky to see any change from \$100. One of VW's two varieties of smart key has to be ordered from Germany at around \$200 (but at least it comes with free coding).

Consumers have complained to the NRMA about the cost and inconvenience, but it points out that you're paying for greatly increased security — which ought to prevent the even greater cost and inconvenience of having your car stolen. Smart-key technology, and the protocols to ensure that you're the only one who'll be able to obtain a new key for your car, cost money.

And don't worry about being stranded in the middle of nowhere: the NRMA says it hasn't yet heard of a single case of a smart key malfunctioning. □

EXPENSIVE SPARES



Last year Anne Todd of Mt Barker, WA, wanted a spare key for her Volkswagen. Unaware she had smart keys, "I first attempted the budget alternative — simply handing over an original key at a kiosk." The new key opened and started her car, but the engine immediately cut out.

Next time she drove the 350 km to Perth, Anne stopped at her dealership for a VW blank, to find she'd have to order one — at \$34, plus \$5 to post it to her.

"I took it to my friendly local provider for the cutting ceremony. Back we went to the vehicle to check the accuracy of his work. The key opened the door, and started the engine — which instantly cut out."

For the key to work, Anne would have to get it coded — "first mention of this vital word" — with an identifying

number, back in Perth. Another trip later, her dealership spoke to the national dealership, which got a code from its European counterpart. Finally her key was coded for \$34.50. "I could hardly believe it was all over. Happily I returned to the bush."

But when Anne used an original spare key she'd left at home to start the car (you've guessed it), the engine cut out. "In a blinding flash of perception I realised that the two keys I took to Perth and the vehicle computer had all been coded with a new number. Thus, once again, I had two perfectly usable keys and one dud." The dud could be fixed, but Anne would have to "just pop in" to Perth for another coding session. "It was really annoying at the time."

Snack time

Muesli bars are generally promoted as healthy, wholesome snacks. But do they live up to their reputation? We looked at over 100 muesli, breakfast and other snack bars to come up with the answer.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A SNACK FOR your kid's lunch box, or even for your own, the good news is there's plenty of muesli and breakfast bars that you can include relatively guilt-free.

Ideally, a snack shouldn't have much fat or salt and should be a good source of fibre, but as long as your diet is healthy overall, you can afford to be a little lenient.

With this in mind we rated the bars in groups from 'best choices' to 'not recommended as an everyday snack'. The table on page 21 tells you the best choices, while the rest are listed on page 23.

In the lunchbox, at the office ...

Lower-fat muesli bars are a good choice for an everyday snack, as they give you the fibre without so much fat. And a lot of breakfast bars are a good option as a snack. They've got a slight edge over regular muesli bars because they've got added vitamins and minerals.

If you can't agree on a bar from our table (kids can be very fussy) the *Good choices* list on page 23 adds a whole lot more for you to choose from that are nearly as good — these include mainly muesli bars, with a couple of breakfast bars and a few other types.

But bear in mind that these snacks aren't perfect — many contain quite a bit of sugar and can be quite sticky, and that's a problem for kids' teeth if it's not brushed off fairly quickly (see *Sticky snacks and your teeth*, below).

Sticky snacks and your teeth

Some of the muesli, breakfast and other bars we looked at are quite sticky, as well as being high in sugar. The

IN BRIEF

- There are plenty of these types of bars that make relatively healthy snacks. We found 29 'Best Choices', plus another 30-odd that are a pretty good choice.
- Some, though, definitely don't deserve the healthy image they claim — with up to 30 g of fat per bar. For snack bars you should avoid, see *Not recommended as an everyday snack*, page 23.
- Even with the snack bars we recommend, there's a downside: it's a recipe for dental decay if you're not careful about brushing your teeth, because they're high in sugar and quite sticky — below.
- More than 360 people tasted popular brands of apricot muesli bars to see which they liked best. For results see page 22.



bacteria in plaque use sugar to produce acids that attack tooth enamel, eventually leading to tooth decay. And sticky foods that cling to the teeth pose a greater risk of decay.

How often you eat is also important because the acids are released to work on the teeth for about 20 to 40 minutes after eating. The more frequently you eat, the more opportunity there is for the acid to affect your teeth.

For dental care, you're better off eating your snack bar after your lunch than between meals because more saliva is produced during meal times, helping to neutralise acid production and clear food from the mouth.

Adults should carry a toothbrush and brush their teeth after eating a sugary snack, but it's unlikely a child would do this. For them, the best you can do is make sure they brush their teeth every morning and evening.

Muesli or breakfast bar — what's the difference?

The real difference between a muesli and a breakfast bar is how they're marketed. 'Breakfast' bars are marketed primarily as a replacement for breakfast, and muesli bars as a snack. However, because they're targeted at the breakfast market, breakfast bars generally tend to be slightly healthier than a lot of regular muesli bars.

A breakfast bar or a bowl of cereal?

Breakfast bars don't come up looking too bad when compared to breakfast cereal. The best breakfast cereal is one that's been minimally processed, without large amounts of sugar, fat or salt added. This includes plain shredded wheat, wheat biscuits and puffed wheat. Rolled oats are also a good option, but are slightly higher in fat. Some bran cereals are also a good option, being very high in fibre.

When you allow for the milk added to breakfast cereal, most of the breakfast bars compare quite well nutritionally, especially if you use full-fat milk on your cereal, although they're not as high in fibre. If you use a low-fat milk, though, the bars are higher in fat (see the table below).

A basic breakfast cereal with milk also has the edge over a breakfast bar when it comes to calcium — calcium from milk and other dairy products is very well absorbed by the body, so calcium added to breakfast bars may not be quite as effective as the real thing. UNCLE TOBYS bars have calcium added to them, while the other major brand of breakfast bars on the market — **SANTARIUM** — doesn't.

For an adult who hasn't time for breakfast, having a breakfast bar on the run is definitely better than having no breakfast at all (it provides carbohydrate for energy, as well as fibre); but for a child, a sit-down breakfast should be a priority.

(continued over page)



Table notes

- Serve size**
This is the weight in grams of one bar.
- Energy**
Energy requirements vary greatly depending on your age, sex, size and level of physical activity. However, as a rough guide, if you're a female in the 18–30 age group, you probably need about 8370 kJ/2000 Calories and if you're a male in the same age bracket you probably need about 9800 kJ/2300 Calories. Seven year old boys need about 7900 kJ/1880 Calories and girls of the same age about 7100 kJ/1690 Calories, with the energy needs for both increasing up to the age of ten, then decreasing slightly until it's back up again for teenagers, (to convert kilojoules (kJ) to Calories you divide by 4.2).
- Sugars**
Sugar plays a role in tooth decay (see *Sticky snacks not good for teeth*) and only provides 'empty calories' — nothing vital to a healthy diet. The Australian Dietary Guidelines say we should eat only a moderate amount of sugars and foods containing added sugars. For more information on sugar and the current state of play, see *Sugar: no longer a bad guy?*, CHOICE, September 1998.
- Sodium**
A diet too high in sodium (a constituent of salt — sodium chloride) can contribute to high blood pressure, which in turn is linked to strokes and heart disease, so it's wise to keep your sodium intake down. This is particularly important for older people (65 and over), as blood pressure often increases with age.
- Fibre**
Health experts recommend we aim for at least 30 g of fibre a day, but most people eat far less than this.
- Fat**
Eating too much fat is a major cause of obesity and can also increase your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, gallstones and some types of cancer (bowel, gall bladder, ovary and breast cancer). So it's important to watch your fat intake — always look at nutrition labels on food to see how much fat they contain. For more on fat, see *Is 10 g a lot of fat?*, page 22.

How does a breakfast bar stack up against a bowl of cereal?

	Fat (g)	Fibre (g)	Sugar (g)	Sodium (mg)	Calcium (mg)
'Average' breakfast bar (A)	3	1.8	10.6	67 (2.9% RDI)	176 (22% RDI) (B)
2 Wheat biscuits + 150 mL of low-fat, calcium-increased milk	1	3.5	10.6	186 (8% RDI)	248 (31% RDI)
2 Wheat biscuits + 150 mL of whole milk	6.6	3.5	7.9	159 (7% RDI)	177 (22% RDI)

RDI Recommended daily intake.

- (A) This is the average of several breakfast bars that make it into the 'Best choice' table.
(B) Santarum breakfast bars do not have any added calcium. This figure is an average of the three Uncle Tobys breakfast bars in the 'Best choice' table.

Best choice: muesli, breakfast and other snack bars

These bars contain no more than 4 g of fat, 1.5 g or more of fibre and less than 10% of the recommended upper daily limit for sodium.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Product (in order of lowest to highest fat content)	Serve size (g)	Energy (kJ / calories per serve)	Sugars (g per serve)	Sodium (% of upper daily limit per serve)	Fibre (g per serve)	Fat (g per serve)
KELLOGG'S Just right cereal bars (A)	33	510 / 123	11.5	2	1.9	0.3
SUNIBRITE Slim 'n' trim banana slice	45	500 / 119	15.8	3	3.8	0.9
UNCLE TOBYS Oven baked apple fruit bars	38	550 / 130	13.5	5	1.5	1.1
UNCLE TOBYS Oven baked apricot fruit bars	38	550 / 130	13.5	5	1.5	1.1
UNCLE TOBYS Oven baked blueberry fruit bars	38	540 / 130	13.5	5	1.5	1.1
HEALTHY CO Low fat banana snack bars	100	990 / 238	31.6	6	7.6	1.8
DAYDAWN Tropical fruit lower fat muesli bars (B)	31	490 / 117	6.7	1	1.9	2.0
FARMLAND Chewy tropical fruits muesli bars	32	500 / 120	6.8	1	1.9	2.0
HOME BRAND Lower fat apricot & coconut muesli bars	31	470 / 112	6.9	1	1.8	2.2
DAYDAWN Apricot & coconut lower fat muesli bars (B)	31	490 / 117	5.1	< 1	2.1	2.4
FARMLAND Chewy apricot & coconut muesli bars	32	500 / 120	5.2	< 1	2.1	2.5
SANTARIUM Apricot fruity bix bars (C)	25	430 / 102	8.2	2	1.5	2.7
SANTARIUM Tropical fruity bix bars (C)	25	430 / 102	8.2	2	1.5	2.7
SANTARIUM Wild berry fruity bix bars (C)	25	430 / 102	8.2	2	1.5	2.7
SANTARIUM Fruit & nut fruity bix bars (C)	25	400 / 96	8.4	2	1.3 (G)	2.7
UNCLE TOBYS Chewy tropical fruits muesli bars	31	500 / 118	7.0	1	1.5	3.8
UNCLE TOBYS Sports plus breakfast bars (D)	37	610 / 146	11.9	4	1.9	3.0
UNCLE TOBYS Lite start breakfast bars (D)	37	590 / 141	13.0	5	2.0	3.2
FIRST CHOICE Mixed berry delight fruit bars (E)	50	670 / 161	12.0	5	1.9	3.4
FIRST CHOICE Apricot delight fruit bars (E)	50	660 / 157	15.3	5	2.9	3.5
FIRST CHOICE Strawberry delight fruit bars (E)	50	690 / 164	12.8	6	1.8	3.5
UNCLE TOBYS Chewy apricot & coconut muesli bars (F)	31	520 / 124	6.9	1	2.0	3.5
UNCLE TOBYS Fibre plus breakfast bars (D)	43	680 / 162	14.2	4	2.3	3.5
BLACK & GOLD Three fruits muesli bars	31	530 / 126	4.0	1	1.9	3.6
UNCLE TOBYS Chewy forest fruits muesli bars (F)	31	540 / 129	7.9	1	1.6	3.8
FARMLAND Crunchy apricot muesli bars	31	570 / 135	7.3	1	1.8	3.9
UNCLE TOBYS Original crunchy apricot muesli bars (F)	31	540 / 128	5.3	3	1.7	3.9
DAYDAWN Reduced fat choc chip muesli bars	31	530 / 127	6.8	1	1.5	4.0
UNCLE TOBYS Chewy choc chip muesli bars	31	540 / 130	6.0	4	1.7	4.0

MOTHER EARTH Apricot, Raisin, Raisin & Sultana, Tangy orange & lemon, and Blueberry & apple wholemeal fruit bars all meet the fat and fibre criteria for this group, but sodium levels weren't included on the nutrition panels so we don't know if they meet this criterion.

(A) These cereal bars have added vitamins B2, niacin and folate as well as the mineral iron.

(B) Only available in Queensland.

(C) These breakfast bars have B1, B2, niacin and iron added to them.

(D) These breakfast bars all have vitamins B1, B2 and niacin added, as well as the minerals iron and calcium. Lite Start also has folate added, and Fibre Plus has vitamin A added.

(E) Available in NSW, Queensland, SA, Victoria.

(F) Uncle Tobys is in the process of reformulating these bars. They say the new versions should be on the supermarket shelves by October. The most significant change is that they'll have less fat.

(G) Even though its fibre content is slightly less than the cut-off of 1.5 g, its low fat content justifies it being in this group.



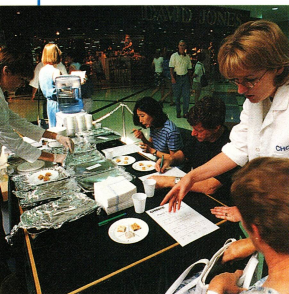
But what do they taste like?

CHOICE had a big day at Miranda Westfield shopping centre in Sydney where, among other things, we conducted a taste test of muesli bars. The response was great — over 360 people tasted and rated the muesli bars for us. The tasters included kids and adults.

Because there are far too many to taste every muesli bar we chose ones that had apricot in them — this meant that a muesli bar from most of the big brands was

included. Each trialist tasted muesli bars blind (that is, without knowing what brands they were) and rated them according to how much they liked them. The results are in the table, right. The two muesli bars that were liked the most both had yoghurt toppings, and one of them (**NANA DIVER'S**) also made it into the *Good choices* list. If you like apricots and yoghurt it's probably worth a try.

We also discovered that if a muesli bar was sweet, fruity or moist the tasters liked it; but if it was bland, floury, dry or wasn't chewy they didn't.



Taste test results

Brand	Average score (%)
NANA DIVER'S Apricot and yoghurt muesli slice	77
UNCLE TOBYS Apricot yoghurt toppers muesli bar*	76
UNCLE TOBYS Chewy apricot and coconut muesli bar*	68
FARMLAND Chewy apricot & coconut muesli bar	67
NO FRILLS Apricot and coconut muesli bar	66
WHOLESALE BAKE Apricot muesli yoghurt coated muesli bar	66
MOTHER EARTH Apricot low fat muesli slice	65
HOME BRAND Apricot and coconut muesli bar	64
HOME BRAND Low fat apricot & coconut muesli bar	64
SAVINGS Chewy apricot and coconut muesli bar	63
UNCLE TOBYS Original crunchy apricot muesli bar*	57

* **UNCLE TOBYS** is in the process of reformulating these muesli bars to contain less fat.

How do different snacks shape up?

The ideal snack is a piece of fruit, such as an apple. It's a good source of fibre, and contains virtually no fat or salt. However, if it's an everyday treat you're after and an apple doesn't hit the spot, some snacks are better than others.

A muesli bar isn't a bad choice. For example, even though two chocolate biscuits would have less fat, they have virtually no fibre and aren't as filling as a muesli bar, so you might be tempted to eat more. A cinnamon doughnut, a Mars bar or ten squares of chocolate would all be higher in fat and lower in

fibre than a muesli bar, and an iced doughnut would definitely be something to avoid as an everyday treat (an 80 g doughnut is about one-quarter fat).

However, don't assume all muesli bars are equal. As our 'not recommended' list shows, some can be very high in fat. For example, an **UNCLE TOBYS** Oven baked muesli slice contains 26 g of fat (except for the **Original** which contains slightly less) in one bar — that's more than five teaspoons. □

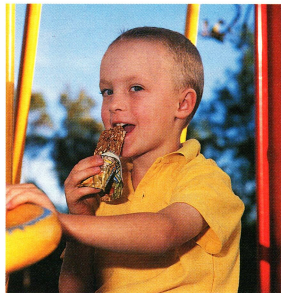
Is 10 grams a lot of fat?

It's not easy to understand what the significance of 10 g of fat is — is it a little or a lot? Should you care if you eat this much in a muesli bar?

Fat provides more than twice the amount of energy per gram as protein and carbohydrates do — 10 g of fat provides 370 kJ (88 Calories).

Health experts recommend that no more than 30% of our daily energy intake should come from fat. So, for example, if you eat 8400 kJ (2000 Calories) per day, no more than 30% of them (2520 kJ/600 Calories) should come from fat. Your muesli bar with 370 kJ/88 Calories from fat is 15% of that.

And if a snack bar has 30 g of fat in it (the amount in one of the bars we didn't recommend) you're getting 44% of your daily fat quota in one hit — and it's supposed to be only a snack!



From the best to the rest

Best choices

For the best choices see the table on page 21.

Good choices

The following aren't as healthy as the bars listed in the *Best choices* table, but they're still good choices in terms of fat, fibre and sodium content: more than 4 g of fat but less than 10 g; 1.5 g fibre or higher; less than 10% of the upper recommended limit for sodium. They're listed from lowest to highest in fat.

UNCLE TOBYS Original crunchy honey crunch muesli bars*

UNCLE TOBYS Fruit & nut breakfast bars

UNCLE TOBYS Original crunchy coconut choc chip muesli bars*

ULTRA SLIM Dark chocolate cherry lites nutritional snack bar

UNCLE TOBYS Nut feast breakfast bars

GO NATURAL Apricot soy bar

UNCLE TOBYS Yoghurt toppers mango & passionfruit muesli bars*

NANA DIVER'S Apricot & choc muesli slices

NANA DIVER'S Apricot and yoghurt muesli slices

NANA DIVER'S Fruit and nut choc muesli slices

NANA DIVER'S Fruit and nut yoghurt muesli slices

NANA DIVER'S Honey and oat choc muesli slices

NANA DIVER'S Strawberry yoghurt muesli slices

UNCLE TOBYS Chewy berry choc chip muesli bars*

UNCLE TOBYS Chewy caramel choc chip muesli bars*

UNCLE TOBYS Original crunchy sultana & pecan muesli bars*

UNCLE TOBYS Yoghurt toppers raspberry muesli bars*

WHOLESOME BAKE Cherry coconut muesli choc ripple

WHOLESOME BAKE Mango & paw paw yoghurt ripple

WHOLESOME BAKE Apricot muesli yoghurt coated

NANA DIVER'S Honey and oat choc muesli slices

NANA DIVER'S Honey & oat yoghurt muesli slices

UNCLE TOBYS Original crunchy nut crumble muesli bars*

UNCLE TOBYS Original crunchy Anzac muesli bars*

BLUEBIRD Wrapps cherry & coconut muesli bars

UNCLE TOBYS Fruit breaks apple cereal bars

UNCLE TOBYS Fruit breaks wild berry cereal bars

WHOLESOME BAKE Anzac slices

SUNIBRITE Mango muesli yoghurt rippled slices

BECOMING HEALTHY Apricot & fibre yoghurt coated bar

SUNIBRITE cherry muesli carob rippled slices

WHOLESOME BAKE Nuts to the max

OK choices

There were about 50 bars that would be OK to eat sometimes, but not as your everyday first choice. These bars all had less than 10 g of fat and less than 10% of the upper recommended limit for sodium, but didn't have much fibre — less than 1.5 g.

We haven't listed them all for the sake of space, but there were a lot of 'no-name' muesli bars in this group, as well as **BLUEBIRD** popcorn bars and some of **KELLOGG'S** cereal bars (Crunchy nut corn flakes, Coco pop bars, Rice bubble treats).

Not recommended as an everyday snack

These had 10 g of fat or more and/or 10% or more of the upper recommended limit for sodium per serve — they're not a good choice for an everyday snack.

BECOMING HEALTHY

Muesli & nut carob coated bar (11.2 g fat)

FREEDOM FOODS

Low fat gluten free lemon & lime slice (20% of daily sodium limit)

Low fat gluten free strawberry slice (20% of daily sodium limit)

Apricot honey & oats (20.3 g fat)

Carob honey & oats (24.6 g fat)

Yoghurt honey & oats (24.6 g fat)

GO NATURAL

Yoghurt coated almond and apricot bar (12.2 g fat)

Almond and apricot bar (13.1 g fat)

Almond & coconut bar (13.2 g fat)

Nut delight bar (14.5 g fat)

Macadamia and apricot bar (16.4 g fat)

Carob coated macadamia nut bar (23.8 g fat)

HEALTHY CO

Low fat apricot snack bar (13% of daily sodium limit)

MAGIC APPLE

Almond & apricot slice (14.7 g fat)

Flapjack (17.1 g fat)

Boosta break (30.4 g fat)

MUESLI CRUNCH

Dunk 'n' eat breakfast bar (11% of daily sodium limit, 11.9 g of fat)

NO FRILLS

Fruit 'n' nut muesli bars (12% of daily sodium limit)

Choc chip muesli bars (12% of daily sodium limit)

Choc chip peppermint muesli bars (11% of daily sodium limit)

Choc coated nut treat muesli bars (11% of daily sodium limit)

Choc coated cherry coconut muesli bars (12% of daily sodium limit)

Apricot & coconut muesli bars (10% of daily sodium limit)

Choc coated peppermint muesli bars (10% of daily sodium limit)

SUNIBRITE

Carob & muesli (18 g fat)

UNCLE TOBYS

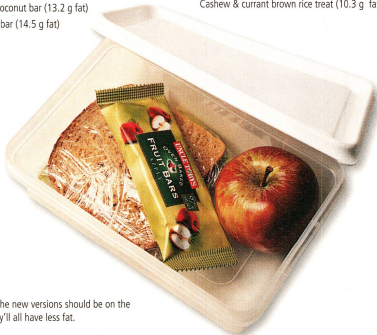
Original oven baked muesli slice (23.7 g fat)

Apricot & almond oven baked muesli slice (25.7 g fat)

Apple and pecan oven baked muesli slice (26 g of fat)

WALLABY NATURAL

Cashew & currant brown rice treat (10.3 g fat)



* UNCLE TOBYS is in the process of reformulating these bars. They say the new versions should be on the supermarket shelves by October. The most significant change is that they'll all have less fat.

Thermal or plain paper?

If you're in the market for a fax machine, you can choose between thermal and plain-paper models. We tell you the pros and cons of each type, and provide test results for 11 machines.



IN BRIEF

- Thermal paper fax machines are usually cheaper to buy and run than plain-paper ones. However, a plain-paper model is for you if you need to keep fax documents for a long period of time.
- There's not much between the models in terms of the quality and speed of sending and receiving text documents. It's mainly the quality and speed of sending and receiving pictures that sets them apart.
- All the tested fax machines are year 2000 compatible.

WE TESTED SIX THERMAL PAPER and five plain-paper fax machines costing up to \$600 (see *Thermal vs plain paper*, page 28, for the pros and cons of the different types).

All of them come with a telephone handset, so you can also use them as a phone. Some also have a built-in answering machine (see the table on pages 28 and 29).

Performance

There wasn't much between the models in terms of the speed and quality of sending and receiving text documents.

What separates them is mainly the quality and speed of sending pictures. If this is important for you, check the *Profiles* on pages 26 and 27 for models that are better in handling pictures.

All the tested models are packed with features, many of which are probably overkill for normal household use, but may be very handy in a small or home office.

We've listed the more important ones in *Features they all have*, page 25, the *Profiles* and the table.

Setting up

■ One phone line

If your fax machine is the only device you want to connect to your single phone line, setting it up is pretty straightforward.

Things become more complex if you want to connect additional equipment, such as another phone or possibly an answering machine.

You need to be careful not to exceed the line's REN capacity (see table note 1, page 28). You have to check whether the fax machine requires you to connect a separate phone directly to the phone line, or to a socket on the fax machine. And you need to

Do you need a fax machine?

If you only want to send and receive faxes occasionally, there may be cheaper options than buying your own fax machine:

■ Use a public fax

Most post offices offer a 'FaxPOST' service you can use to send and receive faxes. You can send a fax to any fax machine, or (if the recipient doesn't have a fax machine) to the nearest post office, where it can be picked up by or forwarded to the recipient (free of charge by normal mail, or for an additional fee by courier). Within Australia, 'FaxPOST' costs \$4 for the first page, and \$1 for each subsequent page. Internationally, it's \$10 and \$4, respectively.

Some newsagencies, chemists and other shops also offer fax services.

make yourself familiar with the different receiving modes of your fax machine, and how to operate the equipment when using the different modes. See *Receiving modes*, right, for details.

■ Two phone lines

If you have a separate phone line for your fax machine, connecting it is as simple as hooking it up to the phone line, plugging in the power cord and switching the fax to 'fax only' mode.

You don't have to worry about identifying whether an incoming call is a phone call or a fax, and you can use both the phone and the fax machine at the same time.

However, a second phone line costs extra for installation (\$173) and monthly fees (\$11.65), and having two phone numbers may be inconvenient.

Troubleshooting

If you have problems operating your fax machine you can contact the manufacturer's helpline (see *Profiles*).

You can also use 'TestFax Plus', a computerised fax-diagnostic service offered by Telstra. Send a one-page document containing text and pictures to 1300 368 999 (25 cents from anywhere in Australia), and within a few minutes you'll receive a report informing you how your machine performed in a number of tests. If applicable, it'll also recommend further action you should take.

WHAT TO BUY

BROTHER Fax-520MC	\$429
BROTHER Fax-510	\$329
BROTHER Fax-920	\$499

■ Use a computer fax modem

Most modern computers come with a built-in modem that gives you access to the Internet, email and faxing. If your computer doesn't have a modem, buying one plus the necessary fax software is still cheaper than most fax machines.

The modem makes a connection between the computer and the phone line, allowing you to send and receive faxes. However, there are limitations:

— You can only send documents that are stored on your computer. So if you want to fax a handwritten letter or a magazine article, you'll need a scanner to scan it into your computer first.

— With most modems, you need to leave your computer switched on if you want to be able to receive faxes any time (although there are some more expensive models that have their own memory and can receive faxes with your computer switched off).

General

- **Phone handset**, so you can use the fax machine as a telephone.
- **Copier function**, so you can copy documents.
- **Help function** (except the **CANON Fax-B150**), which prints a quick reference guide on how to perform some commonly used functions.
- **Warnings** for 'out of paper', 'out of print ribbon/ink' and 'sending error'.

Dialling

- **Pulse and tone dialling**, so you can adjust it to the dialling method used by your phone service.
- **Tone dialling during a pulse-dialling call** (except the **SHARP** models). This is important if your phone service uses pulse dialling, but you're calling an automated or menu-assisted answering system that requires tone dialling.
- **On-hook dialling**, so you can dial without lifting the handset.
- **Redial button**.
- **Automatic redial** (except the **SAMSUNG SF150T**): If you want to send a fax but the line's engaged, the fax machine will automatically try again after a certain time (usually two additional tries after two to five minutes).
- From four to 38 **quick-dial** numbers, depending on the model (except the **PANASONIC KX-FT37AL**, which allows you to create a phone book you can browse through with a dial). You can store frequently used numbers, which require only one or two keystrokes to be dialled.
- From 20 to 100 **abbreviated dialling** numbers, depending on the model, which usually require three or four keystrokes to dial.

Receiving

- **Receiving modes**:
 - **Fax only**: The machine will only receive faxes, not phone calls. You're likely to use this mode when you have a separate line for your fax machine.
 - **Manual**: The machine will treat all incoming calls as phone calls and will ring, for example, until you answer it or the caller hangs up. If it's a fax and you've answered using the fax machine's handset, you need to press the 'start' button to receive it, if you've answered the call on a separate phone, all the tested models allow you to remotely activate them by typing a code into the separate phone's keypad.
 - **Fax/Tel**: The fax machine will check an incoming call. If it's a fax, the machine will automatically receive it. If it's a phone call, the fax machine (but not a separate phone you may have connected) will start ringing.

If you pick up the phone call on an additional phone you have connected according to the manufacturer's instructions, the **CANON Fax-B150**, **PANASONIC KX-FT37AL** and **SAMSUNG SF150T** will stop ringing. All the tested **BROTHER** models will only stop ringing after you've remotely de-activated them by typing a code into the additional phone's keypad. All the tested **SHARP** models and the **SAMSUNG SF3000T** can't be de-activated and will keep on ringing. So they're unsuitable if you don't have easy direct access to them

Slow receiver

While the **SAMSUNG SF3000T** was one of the fastest in sending documents, it was the slowest in receiving — partly because it receives incoming documents into memory first before printing them.

This not only takes more time, but you may also lose part of a document if it has more information than the machine can store. For example, it couldn't completely receive our A4 black-and-white test picture.



Best and worst results when sending a black-and-white picture: the SHARP FO-475 (top), FO-375 and the SAMSUNG SF150T produced much better contrast and detail than the BROTHER Fax-920 (above) and Fax-1020.

— for example, if your house is large or has several floors.

— **TAD:** The tested models that don't have an internal telephone answering device (TAD) have a socket that allows you to connect an external answering machine.

You should use this mode if you're not home. The fax machine allows the answering machine to take an incoming call. If it's a phone call, the caller can leave a message. If it's a fax, the fax machine will take over and receive it.

■ **Volume control** for speaker and ringing tone.

■ **Distinctive ringing:** All the models support a Telstra service called 'FaxStream Duet', which gives you two phone numbers for your one line. The numbers produce different ring patterns, so you can distinguish between fax and phone calls, and the fax can be programmed to recognise the ringing from one number only. However, as you still only have one phone line, you can't use both the phone and the fax at the same time. The service costs \$4 per month.

■ **Remote activation** (see *Receiving modes*, page 25, for details).

Transmission

■ **Automatic document feeder** (except the **SAMSUNG SF150T**), which allows you to load the document you want to send into a compartment that automatically feeds each page (usually up to at least 10 pages).

■ **Transmission quality modes:** 'standard', 'fine' and 'super fine' (except the **CANON Fax-B150**) for text, 'photo' or 'half tone' for pictures.

■ **Contrast adjustment** for light originals (all models) and dark originals (except the **SHARP** models).

■ **Delayed transmission** (except the **SAMSUNG SF150T**): This feature allows you to load the document, dial the number and program a sending time. This is useful if you want to take advantage of cheaper off-peak phone rates or can't send the fax yourself at the desired time.



Brother Fax-520MC



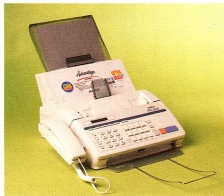
Brother Fax-510



Brother Fax-920



Samsung SF150T



Brother Fax-1020

BROTHER Fax-520MC

Paper type: thermal

Helpline: 02-9887 4344

Target price: \$429

Good points

- Fastest for sending and receiving.
- Easiest to use.
- Speaker phone, which allows you to make a phone call without lifting the handset (for example, when you want other people in the room to take part in the conversation).
- Broadcasting: this is useful if you want to send the same document to a number of people. You can scan the document into the fax machine's memory and enter a list of fax numbers. The fax will then dial one number after the other, sending each a copy of the document.

Bad points

- None to mention.

BROTHER Fax-510

Paper type: thermal

Helpline: 02-9887 4344

Target price: \$329

Good points

- Low standby power consumption.
- Scored well for quality, speed and ease of use.

Bad points

- None to mention.

BROTHER Fax-920

Paper type: plain

Helpline: 02-9887 4344

Target price: \$499

Good points

- Low standby power consumption.
- Speaker phone.
- Can reduce and enlarge copies.
- Broadcasting.

Bad points

- Quality of sent pictures is only borderline.
- Changing the print ribbon is quite fiddly.

SAMSUNG SF150T

Paper type: thermal

Helpline: 02-9417 8459

Target price: \$399

Good points

- Most compact and lightest fax machine in the test.
- Good for sending pictures.

Bad points

- Poor reception of colour pictures.
- No automatic redial.
- No delayed transmission.
- No automatic paper cutter (see page 28).
- No automatic document feeder (see *Transmission*, left).



Changing a print ribbon can be quite fiddly.



Panasonic KX-FT37AL



Sharp FO-475



Sharp FO-375



Sharp FO-1460



Canon Fax-B150

BROTHER Fax-1020

Paper type: plain
Helpline: 02-9887 4344
Target price: \$549

Good points

- Can reduce and enlarge copies.
- Broadcasting.

Bad points

- Changing the print ribbon is quite fiddly.

PANASONIC KX-FT37AL

Paper type: thermal
Helpline: 13 26 00
Target price: \$469

Good points

- Speaker phone.

Bad points

- Very slow in sending black-and-white pictures.
- No quick-dial keys.
- Instructions not as good as the others.

SHARP FO-475

Paper type: thermal
Helpline: 02-9830 4860
Target price: \$469

Good points

- Best sending and receiving quality.
- Equal-best quality for sending pictures.
- Broadcasting.

- Allows you to block receiving faxes from certain numbers.

Bad points

- Can't be remotely de-activated from an extension phone, which means it's not really suited for homes where you don't have easy direct access to it.
- Reloading the thermal paper roll is quite fiddly.
- The second function on some keys isn't labelled.
- Some keys are very small.
- Only allows you to adjust the contrast for light documents you want to send, not for dark ones.

SHARP FO-375

Paper type: thermal
Helpline: 02-9830 4860
Target price: \$369

Good points

- Equal-best quality for sending pictures.
- Allows you to block receiving faxes from certain numbers.

Bad points

- Can't be remotely de-activated.
- Slowest for sending.
- Reloading the thermal paper roll is quite fiddly.
- The second function on some keys isn't labelled.

- Some keys are very small.
- Only allows you to adjust the contrast for light documents you want to send, not for dark ones.

SHARP FO-1460

Paper type: plain
Helpline: 02-9830 4860
Target price: \$499

Good points

- Can reduce and enlarge copies.
- Broadcasting.
- Allows you to block incoming faxes from certain numbers.

Bad points

- Can't be remotely de-activated.
- Only allows you to adjust the contrast for light documents you want to send, not for dark ones.

CANON Fax-B150

Paper type: plain
Helpline: 02-9805 2864
Target price: \$569

Good points

- Broadcasting.

Bad points

- Worst sending quality for text and overall.
- High standby power consumption.

SAMSUNG SF3000T

Paper type: plain
Helpline: 02-9417 8459
Target price: \$569

Good points

- Broadcasting.
- Highest memory capacity.

Bad points

- Can't be remotely de-activated.
- Worst receiving quality.
- Poor reception of colour pictures.
- Slowest for receiving.
- Highest standby power consumption.



Samsung SF3000T

Brand / model (in rank order)	Manufacturer / distributor	Origin	Target price (\$) *	Warranty (years)	Paper type / printing method	Dimensions (W x H x D, mm) **	REN	Number of quick-dial keys	Automatic document feeder capacity (pages)	Receive into memory / claimed / measured capacity
BROTHER Fax-520MC	Brother	Japan	429	(D)	Thermal	300 x 225 x 405	0.5	5	10	20 / 11
BROTHER Fax-510	Brother	Japan	329	(D)	Thermal	300 x 225 x 405	0.5	5	10	
BROTHER Fax-920	Brother	Japan	499	(D)	Plain / ribbon	340 x 320 x 475	0.5	16	10	20 / 11
SAMSUNG SF150T	Samsung	China	399	1	Thermal	280 x 105 x 210	1.5	4	(F)	
BROTHER Fax-1020	Brother	Japan	549	(D)	Plain / ribbon	385 x 320 x 720	0.5	24	20	20 / 11
PANASONIC KX-FT37AL	Panasonic	Malaysia	469	1	Thermal	330 x 155 x 455	0.8	(E)	10	20 / 11.5
SHARP FO-475	Sharp	Thailand	469	1	Thermal	310 x 155 x 315	0.6	10	10	20 / 8.5
SHARP FO-375 (A)	Sharp	Thailand	369	1	Thermal	310 x 155 x 315	0.6	10	10	
SHARP FO-1460	Sharp	Thailand	499	1	Plain / ribbon	370 x 285 x 705	0.6	38	20	30 / 10.5
CANON Fax-B150	Canon	Thailand (C)	569	(D)	Plain / ink	445 x 370 x 340	1.0	10	20	15 / 5
SAMSUNG SF3000T (B)	Samsung	Korea	569	1	Plain / ink	380 x 290 x 665	1.6	5	15	(G) / 20

Thermal vs plain paper

There are two main types of fax machine.

■ **Thermal paper models** print by using heat to change the colour of special, heat-sensitive paper.

■ **Plain-paper models** print on plain copying paper using either an ink-filled cartridge or a print ribbon that's coated with a wax and ink mixture, which is transferred to the paper by heating the appropriate areas.

■ There are also laser fax machines available, but they're usually much more expensive than the range we tested.

With thermal paper models, there's no ink cartridge, print ribbon or toner to replace, which makes them not only cheaper to buy, but also cheaper to run than plain-paper models (see note 6, right).

However, thermal paper turns yellowish and the printed image tends to fade (particularly when exposed to sunlight), and scratches and folds will turn black, making the document harder to read. If you need to file your faxes, you'll have to photocopy the document onto plain paper, or get a plain-paper machine in the first place.

Print ribbon models may pose a privacy problem. As the ink is transferred from the ribbon to the paper letter for letter, you can read the faxes you've received on the ribbon. This may not bother most users, but can be a problem if you're using the fax machine for sensitive or confidential documents.

1 Ringer Equivalent Number (REN)

Any device you connect to your phone line (phones, answering machines, fax machines, modems) draws from the line's capacity.

The amount they draw is represented by their ringer equivalent number (REN): the higher it is, the more they draw. Generally, phone lines have a maximum REN capacity of three. If the sum of the RENs of all devices you've connected to your line exceeds this, they may not work properly — for example, your phone may not ring.

2 Receive into memory: claimed / measured capacity

With three of the tested models, if your fax machine is out of paper, print ribbon or ink, it can't print out an incoming fax. The others can receive it into memory for you to print out later.

The manufacturers' claims of how many pages a fax machine can receive into memory are based on a relatively brief business letter. We tested the memory using a full text page, which we found more realistic.

SAMSUNG doesn't claim a number of pages for the **SF3000T**, but the actual memory capacity: 0.75 Mb. This was enough to store about 20 of our test pages — by far the most of all the tested models. However, see *Slow receiver*, page 25 for a problem we found with this model.

Note that models with built-in answering machines use the same memory for recording incoming telephone calls. So the number of pages you can store will be lower if you've also received phone messages.

3 Paper cutter

Thermal fax paper comes in rolls of usually 30 or 50 metres. All the thermal paper models in the test except the **SAMSUNG SF150T** have a paper cutter that automatically cuts each page of an incoming fax after printing it.

With the **SF150T** you can easily tear off the printout, which is fine for a one-page fax. However, if you receive several pages, you'll end up with a long piece of paper you have to cut by hand.

Plain paper fax machines don't need a paper cutter as they're using pre-cut sheets of paper.

4 Caller ID

Models with a tick in this column display the caller's number if you subscribe to the 'caller ID' service, and the caller hasn't blocked his or her number.

5 Phone works without power

If a model doesn't allow you to make a call during a power failure, make sure you connect a separate phone (and keep in mind that cordless phones also rely on power). Otherwise you may be left without a working phone in an emergency.

6 Cost for printing a page

The costs per page are based on a Sydney price check for thermal paper (box with six 30 m rolls), plain paper (ream with 500 sheets), print ribbons (packs of two spools where available) and ink cartridges.

■ **Thermal paper models:** Each page sent to you is equivalent to one page of thermal paper being used. You get about 90 A4 pages from a 30 m roll of thermal paper.

■ **Print ribbon models:** Each page sent to you results in one A4 page of plain paper and the

Answering machine	Paper cutter	Caller ID	Phone works without power	Cost for printing a page (cents)	Text / picture quality score (%)	Speed score (%)	Ease of use score (%)	Standby power score (%)	Overall score (%)	Brand / model (in rank order)
✓	✓	✓		3.3	64	76	78	80	73	BROTHER Fax-520MC
	✓	✓		3.3	66	69	76	90	72	BROTHER Fax-510
	na	✓		9.7	63	68	74	90	71	BROTHER Fax-920
✓			(H)	3.3	65	66	71	80	69	SAMSUNG SF150T
	na	✓		8.3	63	69	74	60	68	BROTHER Fax-1020
✓	✓	✓		3.3	67	65	72	70	68	PANASONIC KX-FT37AL
✓	✓	✓		3.3	68	65	67	80	68	SHARP FO-475
	✓	✓		3.3	66	64	65	80	67	SHARP FO-375 (A)
	na			11.6	62	60	70	80	66	SHARP FO-1460
	na		(J)	25.4	59	63	77	50	65	CANON Fax-B150
✓	na	✓	(H)	19.2	62	58	74	30	61	SAMSUNG SF3000T (B)

* Prices shown are good target to aim for when shopping around, based on nationwide checks in April/May 1999.

** Dimensions shown are rounded up to the next 5 mm, all protruding parts (except cord) included.

na Not applicable.

(A) Similar to SHARP FO-175 (\$299), which doesn't have a paper cutter.

(B) Similar to SAMSUNG SF3000 (\$499), which doesn't have a built-in answering machine.

(C) Handset made in China.

(D) Not stated, but manufacturer told us it's one year.

(E) No quick-dial keys, but uses a dial knob to scroll through phone list.

(F) You have to manually feed the pages one by one.

(G) Memory size stated as 0.75 megabytes.

(H) Model can make but not receive calls without power.

(J) Model can receive but not make calls without power.

equivalent length of print ribbon being used. You get about three A4 pages per metre of print ribbon. You can rewind the ribbon and use it again, but you're risking poor quality print or may even end up with an unreadable fax.

Ink cartridge models: The number of pages you can print with one cartridge (and therefore the cost per page) greatly depends on the contents of the faxes you receive. The more content — or ink needed to print out, for example pictures — the fewer pages you can print, and the more expensive each page is.

We used a full text page (see note 2) to determine the capacity of the tested cartridges (**CANON** Fax-B150: 248 pages, **SAMSUNG** SF3000T: 334 pages). This is probably close to a worst case scenario for printing text faxes.

7 Text / picture quality score

This is a combination of the following assessments:

Text quality: A text document was sent from the tested machines to a high-quality reference fax, and received by the tested machines from the reference fax. This was done in both 'standard' and 'fine' modes. A panel assessed the quality of the printouts.

Picture quality: Both a black-and-white and a colour version of the same A4 picture were sent from

the tested machines to the high-quality reference fax, and received by the tested machines from the reference fax. This was done using 'photo' mode. A panel assessed the quality of the printouts.

8 Speed score

This is a combination of the following assessments:

Text speed: Both a one-page and a three-page text document were sent from the test machines to the high-quality reference fax, and received by the tested machines from the reference fax. This was done in 'standard' mode. The transmission times (from pressing the 'start' button to the finished print-out) were measured.

Picture speed: Both a black-and-white and a colour version of the same picture were sent from the tested machines to the high-quality reference fax, and received by the tested machines from the reference fax. This was done in 'photo' mode. The transmission times (from pressing the 'start' button to the finished print-out) were measured.

9 Ease of use score

A user panel assessed the instruction manuals and used them to perform basic tasks such as setting up the fax machine, storing phone numbers in speed-dial spots and changing thermal paper rolls, print ribbons or ink cartridges.

10 Standby power score

The worst model consumed about 2.5 times as much power on standby as did the best.

This difference may result in additional running costs of only a few dollars per year. However, taking into account the hundreds of thousands of fax machines in Australian homes and offices, it means that tens of millions of tonnes of waste, and tens of thousands of tonnes of the greenhouse gas CO₂, are unnecessarily released into the atmosphere.

The only sensible way of using a fax machine is by leaving it on standby for 24 hours a day. Relatively new advanced electronics makes it possible to reduce standby power consumption by at least a factor of ten. CHOICE thinks manufacturers should introduce this new technology as soon as possible to minimise power consumption.

11 Overall score

The overall score is a combination of quality, speed, ease of use and standby power consumption, weighted as follows:

■ Quality score: 30%.

■ Speed score: 30%.

■ Ease of use score: 30%.

■ Standby power score: 10%.

Update: Washing machines

Which of the top loaders on the market gets your washing clean and doesn't cost the earth?

BEST BUYS

There are two Best Buys: one smaller machine with a claimed capacity of 5–6.5 kg and one larger model — see the two profiles, right. They're based on running costs over 10 years and purchase price. Best Buys scored at least 68% overall.

THIS IS THE SECOND WASHING MACHINE update we've published this year as part of our continuous testing program. The results of our latest test of 15 top loaders are in the table below. All of the 11 front loaders we tested previously are still available, so if you're after a front loader, see our March 1999 issue. Together, both sets of results will give you an up-to-date picture of some of the latest washing machines on the market that sell for up to \$1200 (or slightly more: some prices have gone up so some front loaders now cost more).

If you'd like to find out what to look for in a new washing machine, how to wash economically and what we tested, see our comprehensive September 1998 test report or send a stamped (85 cents in NSW, 95 cents elsewhere), self-addressed, A5 or larger envelope to **Washing machines**, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, and we'll send you a photocopy. □

■ **Smaller top loaders**
(claimed capacity) 5–6.5 kg

FISHER & PAYKEL
Excellence GW509

BEST BUY

Target price: \$770

This is the cheapest of the smaller top loaders that scored at least 68% overall. It's also cheaper to run than the top-scoring machine in this size range, the **HOOVER Boss 650L**.

Our reliability survey shows that 95% of **FISHER & PAYKEL** owners would buy the brand again, and 85% of **FISHER & PAYKEL** machines didn't need repair in the previous 12 months (out of the 595 reported on). This is within a range of 69–88% reliability across all the brands reported on.



Washing machines update

(Table notes and footnotes, above far right)

Brand / model (in rank order)	Manufacturer / distributor	Origin	Target price* (\$)	Warranty (years)	Dimensions ** (H x W x D, mm)	Wash capacity (kg, claimed / tested / measured)	Cold-only tap connection		Heater	Running costs (\$/10 years)
							1	2		
HOOVER Boss 800EL	Email	Australia	995	2	1040 x 655 x 735	8.0 / 6.5 / 5.5	✓			902
HOOVER Boss 800RL	Email	Australia	919	2	1040 x 655 x 735	8.0 / 6.5 / 5.5	✓			902
FISHER & PAYKEL Excellence GW709	Fisher & Paykel	New Zealand	999	1 (B)	990 x 650 x 700	7.5 / 6.0 / 6.0	✓		✓ (E)	1083
HOOVER Boss 650L	Email	Australia	799	2	1030 x 655 x 735	6.5 / 5.0 / 4.5	✓			1105
FISHER & PAYKEL Excellence GW609	Fisher & Paykel	New Zealand	899	1 (B)	985 x 600 x 650	6.5 / 5.0 / 5.0	✓		✓ (E)	964
FISHER & PAYKEL Excellence GW509	Fisher & Paykel	New Zealand	770	1 (B)	980 x 560 x 620	5.5 / 4.5 / 4.0	✓		✓ (E)	962
HOOVER Boss 750L	Email	Australia	849	2	1030 x 655 x 735	7.5 / 6.0 / 6.0	✓			1058
HOOVER 500M	Email	Australia	569	2	965 x 590 x 630	5.0 / 4.0 / 3.0	✓			837
HOOVER 550EM	Email	Australia	699	2	980 x 590 x 640	5.5 / 4.5 / 4.5	✓			753
HOOVER 550M	Email	Australia	599	2	980 x 590 x 640	5.5 / 4.5 / 4.5	✓			753
FISHER & PAYKEL Fresh AW095	Fisher & Paykel	Australia	599	1 (B)	998 x 560 x 620	5.0 / 4.0 / 4.0	✓			1223
SIMPSON Concorde 541 (A)	Email	Australia	669	2 (C)	1015 x 580 x 625	5.0 / 4.0 / 4.0	✓			1148
SIMPSON Esprit 550 (A)	Email	Australia	619	2 (C)	1040 x 575 x 625	5.5 / 4.5 / 4.0	✓			1161
WHIRLPOOL 6245E	Whirlpool	US	899	2 (D)	1060 x 610 x 710	6.0 / 5.0 / 5.0	✓			1243
WHIRLPOOL 5132E	Whirlpool	US	749	2 (D)	1060 x 610 x 710	5.5 / 4.5 / 5.0	✓		✓ (F)	1233

Larger top loaders (claimed capacity) 7–8 kg

HOOVER Boss 800EL (800RL)

BEST
BUY

Target price: \$995 (\$919)

Of the larger top loaders we tested, this is a good, all-round performer. It's one of the more expensive models, but the cheapest to run and the most water- and energy-efficient in its group.

Our reliability survey shows that 85% of HOOVER owners would buy the brand again, and 73% of HOOVER machines didn't need repair in the previous 12 months (out of the 1225 reported on). This is within a range of 69–88% reliability across all the brands reported on.



Table notes

Clones

The machines joined by a square bracket are 'clones': they're technically the same and so have the same performance scores and claimed capacities, but different features, extra wash programs, etc.

1 Wash capacity

'Claimed' is what's on the energy label; 'tested' is the weight of clothes we washed (80% of claimed) and 'measured' relates to a standard way of calculating capacity — it provides an accurate indication of the real/relative differences in drum sizes, since it's independent of any claims.

2 Cold-only tap connection

If you want to use just cold water, most models in this test require a special sealing cap (which isn't supplied) on the hot-water inlet. The two Whirlpool models require a 'Y' connector, which isn't supplied either.

3 Running costs

This is an estimate of how much it'll cost you over 10 years (the average life of a washing machine) for water and electricity if you wash the equivalent of one load every day using a 'normal' cycle. The calculations are based on 12 cents per kWh for electricity and \$1 per 1000 L for water.

4 to 9

See the notes with the table in our September 1998 washing machines test report for further information on what was tested and measured to achieve these scores.

10 Overall score

Dirt removal contributes 40% to the overall score, with gentleness and water, energy and spin efficiency each weighted equally at 15%.

Footnotes

* Prices shown are a good target to aim for when shopping around, based on nationwide checks in April/May 1999.

** Dimensions (rounded up to the next 5 mm) are measured for the smallest 'box' that could be placed around the machine, allowing space for the inlet and drain hoses. It's best to leave extra space around the machine for easy installation and air circulation.

(A) This machine was discontinued in May, but you may still find it in shops.

(B) Extra year of free service if 'SmartCare' registration card is completed and returned.

(C) Additional three years on the transmission

(D) Third to fifth year: parts only for gear case assembly and lid rust; third to 10th year: parts only for outer tub.

(E) Controls the cold water temperature.

(F) The automatic temperature control regulates the water temperature if it's either too hot or too cold.

(G) This machine had problems coping with a high-sudsing detergent during our tests. If you use such a detergent, the machine's spin efficiency may be affected.

4	5	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Cycle time (minutes / 'normal' wash)	Water used (L)	Water efficiency score (%)	Energy efficiency score (%)	Spin efficiency score (%)	Gentleness score (%)	Dirt removal score (%)	Overall score (%)	Brand / model (in rank order)
64 47	100	69	76	69	64	77	72	HOOVER Boss 800EL
64 47	100	69	76	69	64	77	72	HOOVER Boss 800RL
66 41	156	48	76	81	60	74	70	FISHER & PAYKEL Excellence GW709
67 49	120	52	62	69	52	86	70	HOOVER Boss 650L
69 38	136	46	73	77	60	77	69	FISHER & PAYKEL Excellence GW609
63 38	109	52	64	75	58	76	68	FISHER & PAYKEL Excellence GW509
59 49	111	63	69	48 (G)	52	84	68	HOOVER Boss 750L
66 45	90	55	64	55	56	80	66	HOOVER 500M
66 40	82	64	71	44 (G)	60	76	66	HOOVER 550EM
66 40	82	64	71	44 (G)	60	76	66	HOOVER 550M
71 42	135	33	48	78	56	80	64	FISHER & PAYKEL Fresh AW095
61 46	123	38	50	67	48	83	64	SIMPSON Concorde 541 (A)
63 50	123	45	55	67	44	82	64	SIMPSON Esprit 550 (A)
60 46	126	50	55	59	50	81	64	WHIRLPOOL 6245E
62 38	127	44	51	55	48	83	63	WHIRLPOOL 5132E

It could be you ...

... who wins the lottery, but let's face it, it's pretty unlikely. The odds are always heavily stacked against the punter, though there are ways you can improve your chances.

IN BRIEF

■ When your lottery numbers come up for the \$11m lottery — take a deep breath. You may be sharing it with a crowd of other winners who've chosen the same numbers.

■ Some lotteries are a better bet than others as they funnel more of the money that's gambled into prizes, rather than taxes and running costs.

FANCY A FLUTTER? YOU'RE IN LUCK. It seems that we're offered a new opportunity to bet every day.

You can put something on the horses or the roulette wheel, or choose from an ever-increasing range of lotteries. And you don't even have to go to the TAB or newsagent any more — you can bet from the comfort of your own computer screen.

Gambling turnover in Australia is on the increase, reaching a staggering \$94.5 billion in 1997-98. People in Victoria bet more than those in any other state, wagering on average \$9357 per person over the year.

The Northern Territory led the field for racing, splashing out \$2438 a head, and casino spending, at \$3523 each, while people in NSW fed \$6498 a head to gaming machines.

We're also way ahead internationally — a widely accepted statistic (although we're not quite sure where it comes from) puts the NSW share of the world's pokies at one in 10, not bad for a state boasting around one in a thousand of the world's population.

Which bet's the best bet?

We can't tell you which horses to back, or how to break the bank at the casino, but we've looked at some of the many lotteries and lotto's available around Australia.

When you're choosing between lotteries, two things are worth considering:

- The percentage of money wagered that comes back as prizes.
- How that money is distributed.

Percentage return

Obviously, not all the money that's bet in a game is ploughed back into prizes — the operator gets a

profit, the government its tax and some is donated to charities. Many Australian lotteries, including the big national games, redistribute around 60% of the money wagered as prize money.

Of course, for any given game, the higher the return, the more there is available for you to win. It's worth checking, as percentages vary. For example, all Tattersalls games pay back 60% except for The Pools, which pays back only 50% for historical reasons. The NT Lottery Company's ticket lottery isn't such a good deal, currently returning just under 42%.

Keno games, which have state-wide rather than national draws, look like a better bet, returning 75% in NSW and Victoria. But bear in mind that, as the games are played in clubs and they're over in a matter of minutes, you're likely to be tempted to play a number of games.

The same goes for gaming machines, including pokies, which often pay back around 90%. Even if you did get back 90% of your money every time, by playing multiple games you'd end up with a return of 90% of 90% of 90%, which very quickly becomes not much.

Prizes

The distribution of prizes is also important: would you rather enter a lottery with many small prizes or a few big ones?

If you'd rather aim high, then the national lotto's are for you. The national lottery Powerball, for instance, gives you a shot at a minimum prize of \$1m. Rollovers are common, building up to huge jackpots such as the recent \$20m pot. So what's your chance of picking the right numbers? Just over one in 55 million!



You've got a much better chance of winning Oz Lotto — one in only 8 million. But, because it's easier to win, it doesn't roll over so often and its top prizes tend to be smaller than Powerball's.

If you'd rather have a good chance of getting a prize, however small, then go for scratchies. They tend to offer a one in five chance of a prize, but winning one is no guarantee of retirement: you could walk away with the princely sum of \$2.

It's also worth checking exactly what the prize is — it might not be cash. Current NT Lottery tickets, for example, proclaim that \$250,000 in prizes is up for grabs.

But the big winner gets only \$150,000 in cash. The rest of the \$200,000 first prize is made up of air tickets, jewellery, clothing, NT tours and Aboriginal art. All very nice, but not necessarily what you'd have chosen to do with \$50,000.

Which provider?

Tickets for national lotteries, such as Powerball and Oz Lotto, are available from your state's retailer. It doesn't matter which state you buy in — you're entering the same draw, with the same prize up for grabs and the same winning numbers. There are slight differences in conditions and prices: for example, Victorians buying from local provider Tattersalls pay an extra 10 cents tax per ticket.

You can buy interstate by post or Internet, for example by post from Queensland's Golden Casket or from Tattersalls via its Internet agent (www.luck-e-lotto.com.au).

If you're only buying a few tickets you won't save much by buying interstate. Queenslanders *could* save almost \$180 by buying multiple tickets online from Tattersalls, rather than from local provider Golden Casket. But to make that saving they'd have to buy a Powerball Powerplay 20 — 15,504 games at \$7823.90 — rather more than most people would care to risk on a lottery.

Multi-week entries — a good deal?

It may seem at first glance that multiple games are the smart way to play. Two games are often cheaper than one; you might assume that by the time you're buying 10 weeks' worth of games at once, you're making quite a saving.

But, apart from committing you to gambling potentially large sums of money, multi-week entries may not be the bargains they seem.

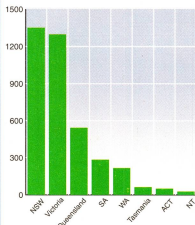
For example, if you buy the basic two-game ticket for the NSW lottery '6 From 38 Pools', you pay 60 cents per game. Buy four games at once and the price drops to 55 cents.

Gambling revenue dependence

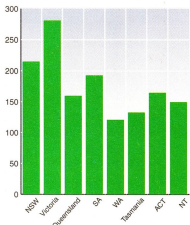
State governments are becoming increasingly dependent on gambling revenue.

In 1992-93, gambling taxation contributed \$2193m to government coffers around Australia (the equivalent of \$2434m today). Five years later this figure had reached \$3833m.

The states' takings for 1997-98 (in \$m)



The states' takings per capita for 1997-98 (in \$)



Lucky numbers

The big question for many lotto entrants is whether some numbers really are luckier than others. Of course, all numbers have an equal chance of being picked, unless something goes wrong with the process.

You can't improve your chance of choosing the right numbers, but you *can* minimise your chance of having to share your money.

Imagine finally winning the big prize: planning your retirement, that holiday in Kenya you've always fancied and perhaps a bigger home. Then imagine discovering that, once you've shared your prize with 149 other



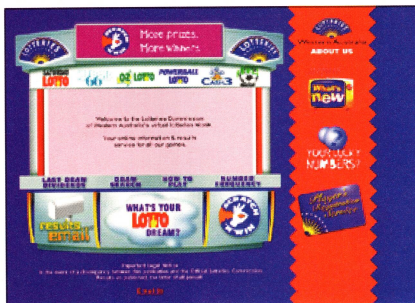
The low-down

If you're interested in gambling information, try visiting the Tattersalls website at www.tattersalls.com.au. It's the only site we came across which, as well as trying to sell you tickets, provided comprehensive probabilities for all its games.

Buy 500 games and you'd expect the ticket price to drop significantly, but it only falls to 50.45 cents per game.

Systems entries are another way to reduce the cost of each game, but again the cost won't fall by very much. For a systems entry you select, for example, 8 numbers instead of the normal 6. You can win with any combination of numbers out of the 8 you've chosen, so you're effectively placing multiple entries in the same game.

A single Oz Lotto entry from Tattersalls costs \$1.10. Buy the systems equivalent of seven games and you'll save 4 cents a game; buy 38,760 games (a snip at \$39,489) and you'll be paying \$1.02 for each game.



Want to check out the lottery results from the comfort of your armchair? Most providers now have informative websites, although you can't buy tickets from all of them.

Getting Help

Compulsive gambling is a serious issue. Problem gamblers have difficulty controlling the amount of time and money they spend gambling, with serious repercussions for their jobs and families. Some even turn to crime to fund their gambling.

If you, a family member or friend has a gambling problem, help is available. Try the 24-hour national freephone "G line" on 1800 633 635, or contact Gamblers Anonymous on one of its 24-hour helplines:

- New South Wales (02) 9564 1574
- Queensland (07) 3830 4196
- Victoria (03) 9696 6108
- South Australia (08) 8212 6933

When is a gamble not a gamble?

Quite often, if you believe the advertising. For starters, gambling isn't gambling when it's an "investment".

■ Several glossy prospectus-like brochures have hit our desks recently, offering the opportunity of a lifetime. There's lots of talk of tax-free investment, a few hours' work each week, boats, holidays and so on. And all you have to do is buy computer software, costing anything from around \$1000 to \$5000, to get your investment process started. So what does the software do? Several pages down the track, we find out that it's a betting system for horse racing.

■ As for Queensland lottery company Golden Casket, it

winners, you'll only get around \$15,500. The 150 unlucky winners of the Tattslotto draw of July 24, 1993 all picked the same numbers, probably because they made a pattern on the entry form. Not a good way to choose.

According to NSW Lotteries, most players tend to pick numbers in the middle of the grid, so choosing numbers around the edge can be a good idea. Also, though numbers in a sequence — such as 31, 32, 33, 34 — aren't any less likely to come up together than any other set of numbers you choose, most people avoid them. So pick a sequence and you're more likely not to have to share a prize. Many people use birthdays to pick their lucky numbers, so go for numbers above 31.

If choosing your own numbers is too hard, don't worry — you don't have to. Among others, Lotteries Western Australia's website offers to do it for you (www.lottery.wa.gov.au). Simply enter the name of a family member, your birth date, or any details you like, and it'll generate your "lucky numbers of the day". And keep your fingers crossed. □

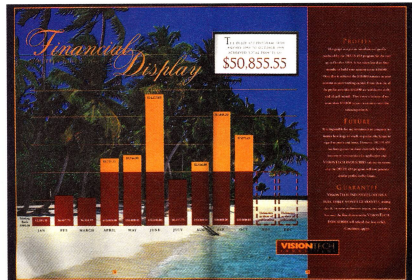
"does not consider its games to be forms of gambling. We refer to them as gaming entertainment".

■ The line between gambling and investment does become very thin in some areas, for example on a stock exchange. It's hard to argue that buying options, entitling you to buy shares at a specified price in the near future (and hopefully sell them on at a fat profit), isn't simply betting that the price of the shares will rise.

■ The Target chain of stores was recently responsible for another blurring of the gambling lines when it introduced toy poker machines for kids. These miniature versions were shaped just like the real thing and worked the same way,

taking real money but paying out lollies instead of cash.

The toys have now been taken off the shelves, in response to community concerns that they weren't giving kids quite the right message.



Computerised betting systems — how your "investment" will perform. If it's this good, you have to wonder why they aren't keeping it to themselves.

The damage of a low-speed bingle can cost between about \$2000 and \$7000 to fix. At which end of the range is your car?



Small crash — big bill?

A LOW-SPEED ACCIDENT IN A CAR-park or in slow-moving city traffic is unlikely to cause you serious bodily harm. But wait until you see the car's repair bill: to fix the damage caused by a smack on your car's nose, you or your insurer may have to fork out up to a third of the purchase price. Make that up to almost 50% when an unnecessarily triggered airbag also needs to be replaced (see *Trigger-happy airbags*, page 36).

Low-speed crash test

How expensive a car is to repair has a major impact on its insurance premium. According to NRMA Insurance, about 60 cents of each insurance dollar goes towards the repair of crash damages.

Each year, the NRMA conducts a standardised and internationally recognised low-speed crash test to assess repair costs. Their latest report included 24 top-selling models.

The test involves a pendulum device hitting the cars on their front right-hand bumper, simulating a 15 km/h crash into a fixed barrier or a collision into the rear of another car at 25–30 km/h. NRMA technical research officers assess the resulting damage.

The test seeks three outcomes:

- To help determine the insurance premiums for the tested models.
- To encourage manufacturers to keep prices of parts low — they can make up more than 75% of the total repair bill (see the table on page 37 for details).
- To reveal design weaknesses that can be rectified when a new version of the model is on the drawing board.

The test results don't give you any safety infor-

mation about the cars. Safety aspects are tested at much higher speeds in the Australian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP). CHOICE regularly reports on the findings from both types of crash tests (see CHOICE, January/February 1999 and May 1999, for the latest ANCAP results).

The results

Small cars

The cheapest car to repair in this category was the DAEWOO Lanos (\$3585).

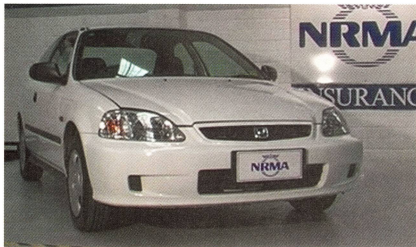
At the other end of the scale, the HOLDEN Barina City and HYUNDAI Excel Sprint incurred repair bills well above \$5000 — an 11% increase on 1997 costs for the Barina, while the Excel's bill remained unchanged. In addition, the driver's airbag on both cars unnecessarily deployed in the crash (see *Trigger-happy airbags*), adding about \$2000 to both bills.

IN BRIEF

- How expensive your car is to repair affects your insurance premium.
- For some models, poor front-end design and/or costly parts mean that repair costs in a low-speed crash can be as much as one third of the car's purchase price.
- Low-speed crash tests don't indicate the safety of a car.

The Subaru Impreza GX cost almost \$7000 to repair.





Still the cheapest of the tested cars to fix: the Honda Civic GLi.

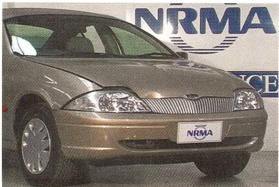
Overall, repair costs were between about one quarter and one third of the comparatively low purchase prices of small cars.

Small-medium cars

While the HONDA Civic GLi and the SUBARU Impreza GX cost almost exactly the same to buy, the Impreza incurred a repair bill of more than three times that of the Civic.

The Civic's bill (\$1900) was the cheapest of all the tested cars, as it was in 1997. It's also the only one apart from those of the large family sedans (see right) that's less than 10% of the car's purchase price. The Impreza was again the dearest to repair of all the tested cars (\$6925).

The new Mazda 626 (right) and Ford Falcon Forte (below right) had only about half the repair bill of their predecessors.



The NISSAN Pulsar LX, HOLDEN Astra City and MAZDA 323 Protege became considerably cheaper to repair compared to 1997.

Medium cars

While the TOYOTA Camry CSi was slightly dearer to repair than in 1997, it's still the cheapest in this category.

A redesign of the MAZDA 626 has almost halved its repair costs. According to NRMA Insurance, this improvement has led to reduced comprehensive insurance premiums of up to 20% for this model.

The FORD Mondeo LX cost more than \$6000 to repair.

Large cars

All the large cars cost less than 10% of their purchase price to repair.

The new FORD Falcon Forte was 46% less to repair than its predecessor, making its bill the lowest in this category (\$1999).

The new MITSUBISHI Magna Executive also improved considerably — its bill decreased by 28%. Both cars are now cheaper to repair than the 1997 winner in this category, the HOLDEN Commodore Executive, and about 4% cheaper to insure than their predecessors.

Trigger-happy airbags

The results of the high-speed ANCAP crash tests regularly show that airbags are important safety devices, which can prevent serious injuries or even death by stopping the driver's or passenger's head from hitting the steering wheel or dashboard.

It's therefore encouraging to see that a driver's airbag is available for all the tested models except the SUZUKI Cino, and a passenger airbag for 19 of the 24 cars. However, while airbags are standard equipment on some models, they're only available for top-of-the-range versions of others.

But airbags are only part of a car's safety system: in a low-speed crash, the seat, seatbelt and head restraint are generally sufficient to prevent injury, and a deploying airbag doesn't necessarily give additional protection. As it is expensive to replace, it's undesirable for an airbag to trigger in low-speed accidents.

Most manufacturers have taken this into account when designing their airbags. Nevertheless, the airbags of two models still deployed in the test (see the table, right) — probably because they're designed to meet overseas rather than Australian requirements. In the US, for example, airbags must trigger at lower accident speeds because wearing a seatbelt still isn't compulsory in all states.

CHOICE asks all manufacturers to design airbags in a way that avoids unnecessary deployment and ensuing expenses in low-speed crashes. □

1998 Low-speed crash test results

Repair costs

1

Make / model (ranked according to total repair costs, within groups)	Purchase price (\$)*	Labour costs (\$)*	Parts cost (\$)* (C)	Total repair costs (\$)*	% of purchase price	Change compared to 1997	Airbags fitted in tested car	Airbag/s triggered in test (replacement cost \$)**
SMALL								
DAEWOO Lanos SE, 1.5 L, 3-door, manual, hatch	14,750	1559	2026	3585	24.3	nt	D, P	
SUZUKI Cino, 1.3 L, 5-door, manual, hatch	15,740 (A)	1537	2421	3958	25.1	✓		na
TOYOTA Starlet Life, 1.3 L, 3-door, manual, hatch	16,190	1650	2378	4028	24.9	✗	D, P	
DAIHATSU Sirion, 1.0 L, 5-door, manual, hatch	13,090	1455	2789	4244	32.4	nt	D, P	
MITSUBISHI Mirage, 1.5 L, 3-door, manual, hatch	16,290	1540	2949	4489	27.6	✓	D, P	
FORD Festiva Trio, 1.3 L, 3-door, manual, hatch	16,604	1673	3296	4969	29.9	✓	(D)	na
MAZDA 121 Metro, 1.5 L, 5-door, manual, hatch	17,990	1769	3362	5131	28.5	✗	D	
HOLDEN Barina City, 1.4 L, 3-door, manual, hatch	16,860	1837	3410	5247	31.1	✗✗	D (E)	✓ (1993)
HYUNDAI Excel Sprint, 1.5 L, 3-door, manual, hatch	14,990	2106	3179	5285	35.3	✓	D	✓ (2047)
SMALL-MEDIUM								
HONDA Civic GLi, 1.6 L, 3-door, manual, hatch	25,950	683	1217	1900	7.3	✓	D (E)	
MITSUBISHI Lancer GLi, 1.5 L, 2-door, manual, coupe	19,790	1540	2559	4099	20.7	nt	D, P	
NISSAN Pulsar LX, 1.6 L, 4-door, manual, sedan	19,990	1505	3564	5069	25.4	✓✓	D (E)	
TOYOTA Corolla Csi Seca, 1.6 L, 5-door, manual, hatch	19,990	1912	3394	5306	26.5	✗	D	
HOLDEN Astra City, 1.8 L, 5-door, manual, hatch	22,860	1174	4269	5443	23.8	✓✓	D, P	
MAZDA 323 Protege, 1.6 L, 4-door, manual, sedan	20,990	1669	3931	5600	26.7	✓✓	D (E)	
SUBARU Impreza GX, 2.0 L, 4-door, manual, sedan	25,940	1944	4981	6925	26.7	✓	D, P	
MEDIUM								
TOYOTA Camry Csi, 2.2 L, 4-door, automatic, sedan	28,995	1288	1980	3268	11.3	✗	D, P	
MAZDA 626, 2.0 L, 4-door, automatic, sedan	32,030	1350	2555	3905	12.2	✓✓✓	D, P	
HOLDEN Vectra GL, 2.2 L, 4-door, automatic, sedan	28,790	1673	3483	5156	17.9	✗	D, P	
FORD Mondeo LX, 2.0 L, 4-door, automatic, sedan	26,690	1721	4387	6108	22.9	✗	D (E)	
LARGE								
FORD Falcon Forte, 4.0 L, 4-door, automatic, sedan	29,990	820	1179	1999	6.7	✓✓✓	D, P	
MITSUBISHI Magna Executive, 3.5 L, 4-door, automatic, sedan	32,500 (B)	1181	1531	2712	8.3	✓✓✓	D (E)	
HOLDEN Commodore Executive, 3.8 L, 4-door, automatic, sedan	32,690	1430	1661	3091	9.5	✗	D (E)	
HONDA Accord, 3.0 L, 4-door, automatic, sedan	43,950	1507	2366	3873	8.8	✗	D, P	

* Prices at November 1998 and rounded to the nearest dollar. Purchase price includes air conditioning and power steering where available. Air conditioning is regarded as standard equipment on some models which have had extended marketing deals.

** Prices include 17.5% mark-up on list price to reflect prices paid by insurers. Costs may not only include airbag, but also seatbelt pre-tensioners, the control module and associated components. Labour costs are not included.

D Driver's airbag.

P Passenger's airbag.

na Not applicable.

(A) Power steering isn't available through NSW dealerships.

(B) Price as at April 1999.

(C) List price plus 17.5% mark-up. Doesn't include the replacement cost for airbags that triggered in the crash.

(D) No airbag was fitted in the tested car. However, a driver's airbag is available for some models in this range.

(E) No passenger airbag was fitted in the tested car. However, it's available for some models in this range or has since become standard equipment.

All information according to NRMA Insurance.

1

Change compared to 1997

This shows how repair costs for each model have changed since the 1997 test:

✗✗ Increased by more than 10%.

✗ Increased by up to 10%.

✓ Unchanged or decreased by less than 10%.

✓✓ Decreased by 10 to 20%.

✓✓✓ Decreased by more than 20%.

nt Not tested — model wasn't tested in 1997 or is new.

Appliance shake-up

In a major shake-up in the whitegoods industry, Southcorp has sold brands to concentrate on wine, packaging and water heaters. We look at the implications for you as consumers.



IN BRIEF

- As a result of the big Southcorp sale, you'll inevitably have less choice in brands of appliances.
- HOOVER refrigerators are the first casualty — manufacturing ceased in April.

SOUTHCORP HAS DECIDED TO GET out of the whitegoods market, and has sold off some major brand names, including: HOOVER, CHEF, DISHLEX and probably VULCAN heating and cooling. It has also divested itself of the distribution of MAYTAG.

Email bought most, and now controls about 60% of the Australian appliance market.

Both Email and Southcorp argue this gives an Australian manufacturer strength to compete with major importers like Whirlpool and GE (US), Samsung (Korea) and Sharp (Japan).

There's been considerable speculation about what Email intends to do with the brands it has acquired.

Senior management at both Email and Southcorp were happy to discuss their intentions and the implications with CHOICE.

Who owns what?

Who owns what appliance brands following Southcorp's decision to get out of the market? And what products fit under each brand name?

- **Email** has bought:
 - HOOVER: washers and dryers.
 - CHEF: dishwashers, cooktops, wall ovens and upright stoves.
 - DISHLEX: dishwashers.
- The following brands were already owned by **Email**:
 - SIMPSON: washers, dryers, dishwashers, cooktops, wall ovens, upright stoves, rangehoods and canopies.
 - WESTINGHOUSE: front-load washers, dishwashers,

cooktops, wall ovens, upright stoves, refrigerators, freezers, rangehoods and canopies.

— **KELVINATOR**: refrigerators, freezers, and air conditioners.

— Email had already bought the **ADMIRAL** and **NORGE** brands from Southcorp but these brands haven't been manufactured for some years.

■ **Hoover Floorcare Asia Pacific**, a newly-formed company associated with Godfreys, has bought:

— HOOVER: vacuum cleaners.

■ **Maytag International (US)** has taken back distribution for:

— MAYTAG: washers, dryers and refrigerators.

■ **Southcorp** will continue to produce:

— VULCAN: water heaters.

It's endeavouring to sell VULCAN heating and cooling products.

Brand name survival

Will any well-known brand names disappear from Australian shops as a result of these changes?

Brands probably won't disappear completely, but it's likely that there will be fewer brands in each product area.

HOOVER refrigerators have been the first casualty. Email didn't buy this section. Southcorp stopped manufacturing them at the end of April. Email will sell out the small volume of remaining HOOVER refrigerators and will undertake to service HOOVER fridges on behalf of Southcorp.

Email says it wants to reassure consumers that, despite newspaper reports to the contrary, for the time being it will keep manufacturing its three existing brands and the three newly acquired brands in all product areas.

Marketing plans were not finalised at the time of going to press, but the company intends to focus

CHEF

Kelvinator





AHEAD OF THE REST.

house[®] dishlex

each brand on its key areas, for example:

- SIMPSON and HOOVER are strong washing machine brands.
- CHEF and WESTINGHOUSE are the major brands in cooking.
- WESTINGHOUSE and KELVINATOR will be focused on refrigeration.

Eventually, consumers may find each brand confined to its key product area.

For example, Email will continue to make SIMPSON cookers and dishwashers for the foreseeable future. However, those products won't be sold in shops. They may only be made available to builders of new houses.

In the long-term, Email may have only one or two brand names in the washing machine, cooking and dishwasher markets. There may only be one locally manufactured brand in each product category.

Will your warranty survive?

If you own a product formerly made by Southcorp and it's still under warranty, what happens to that warranty?

According to Email, warranty conditions for HOOVER washers and dryers, and DISHLEX and CHEF products have not changed. And Email will honour warranties for HOOVER fridges. (For more information, see *Who to call for help?*, right)

Hoover Floorcare Asia Pacific will honour HOOVER vacuum cleaner warranties and service the appliances.

Southcorp will continue to honour warranties for VULCAN water heaters. Even if the VULCAN heating and cooling business is sold, Southcorp will continue to honour warranties and service appliances for a minimum of two years.

Warranty obligations for MAYTAG washers, dryers and refrigerators will pass back to Maytag International.

Email will honour warranties for NORGE and ADMIRAL products.

What about repairs and spares?

Where do you go if you need a repair or spare part for one of the brands affected by the Southcorp sell-off?

The Trade Practices Act essentially says manufacturers should keep spare parts for 10 years after releasing an appliance model. Southcorp claims to have taken steps to ensure parts will be available for affected brands.

Email will stock some spare parts for HOOVER refrigerators; and will manage an established network of up to 1200 service people to service these fridges. They will be able to manufacture additional parts for HOOVER fridges if the need arises.

Email now has 10 service centres around Australia as a result of its expansion; and Southcorp will pass some of its leased facilities on to Email.

If you own any of the brands taken over by Email, that is who you should contact with service inquiries. Use the contact numbers provided for service and spare parts inquiries (see *Who to call for help*, below).

Will appliances be more expensive?

Southcorp and Email say prices won't change much because the discounting pressures come from the major importers including Samsung, Sharp, Whirlpool and GE.

We think consumers may see less competition at the discount end of the market because Email's dominance in the market for washers, dryers, cookers and dishwashers will give them less incentive to market cut-price models. Prices at the bottom end of the market may rise. □

Less choice?

We think Email's dominance of the whitegoods market will eventually lead to fewer models and brands in the shops. Email may decide to run competing brands against each other for the foreseeable future but eventually they may rationalise brands. The Simpson brand, for example, may eventually be confined to washers and dryers; Westinghouse to cookers and refrigerators, and so on. You can probably expect less variety in the shops as a result of Southcorp's sell-off.

SIMPSON
THE HARDEST WORKING APPLIANCES
IN THE WORLD

Who to call for help?

Who do you call for assistance with inquiries about warranties, parts and service for the following brands?

- WESTINGHOUSE, SIMPSON, KELVINATOR, CHEF, DISHLEX, HOOVER washers, ADMIRAL, NORGE and HOOVER refrigerators — call Email's new national (toll free) customer service number 13 13 49.
- HOOVER vacuum cleaners — call Hoover Floorcare Asia Pacific on 1300 360 845.
- MAYTAG — call Maytag International on 1800 816 641.
- VULCAN heating and cooling: Southcorp will continue to service these products for at least the next two years. Contact Southcorp on 13 10 31.
- VULCAN water heaters — call Southcorp on 13 10 31.



Bill-paying options

- Gas
- Insurance
- Rates
- Government

ask for more details



Household bill-paying doesn't have to be a chore.
There are new ways to pay bills that can save you time and money.

IN BRIEF

- It's no longer necessary to line up for your whole lunch hour to get the phone bill paid.
- There are also faster and cheaper bill-paying methods than sending a cheque in the mail.

THERE HAS BEEN A TREMENDOUS growth in electronic payments such as direct debit, direct credit, EFTPOS and Bpay during the past five years because of their speed and convenience. Phone and Internet banking services are also opening up new possibilities.

While you can still pay bills the traditional way by cash, cheque or credit card (see *Traditional options*, page 41), new payment methods are faster and in most cases cheaper.

Electronic payment services enable funds to be transferred and accessed in less than 24 hours.

Check your bills

Not all retailers will accept all the forms of payment described in this article.

Payment instructions will be explained on the bill. Some organisations supply addressed envelopes, reusable envelopes, and bank or credit card payment slips to make your task easier.

Save on bank and government charges by paying up to six bills at Australia Post using only one cheque or EFTPOS transaction.

Australia Post

More than 350 agencies have an arrangement with Australia Post to enable their customers to pay bills at the post office, including all the major utilities (gas, water, electricity and phone). The big advantage is that the organisation that sent you the bill pays for the service, not the consumer.

Australia Post offers two payment options:

- Over the counter using EFTPOS, cash or cheque. You can pay up to six bills in a single transaction. Instead of writing six personal cheques or completing six EFTPOS transactions, you only need to write one cheque or use EFTPOS once. This is a great way to cut down on bank fees and government charges.

With EFTPOS make sure you know the maximum daily limit for your account (for example \$1000). You'll only be able to pay bills by EFTPOS totalling less than that amount.

- Over the phone using Telephone Billpay, which is similar to Bpay, (see page 41). You have to register first (ask at your post office for details).

Australia Post also represents the DEFT Payment System for the payment of domestic rents. Real estate agents who are members of DEFT give a swipe card to their tenants, who present the card at an Australia Post outlet each time they pay their rent.

Direct debit

This is one of the cheapest and most convenient ways to pay your bills. A direct debit allows a third party to debit your account. The payment is made on the due date directly from your account. An alternative is direct credit, where the payment is made from your credit card.

You'll need to complete an application form, supplied by the organisation (electricity, gas supplier, credit card, etc) with your full name, account number and bank number details (BSB).

You'll usually be sent a bill in the mail in the traditional way. It will show the date and amount of funds to be debited.

Direct debit can save you time and money, and transactions of this type are usually free of bank charges.

Periodic payments

Periodic payments are convenient for the payment of regular and constant amounts like loan repay-

ments or insurance premiums. Contact your bank to set one up. You will need to tell it:

- How much you wish to have automatically transferred.
- From which account.
- The account number you want the money paid into, and bank BSB.
- How often you want the payment made (weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly or annually). A fee usually applies for each periodic payment to another bank or organisation.

Bpay

With Bpay, you can pick up the phone and transfer funds from your bank account to over 700 organisations that send bills. This allows you to pay bills with just one phone call, when and where you want. You save on writing cheques and buying stamps.

To use Bpay you'll need a touch phone. Your bank, building society or credit union also has to provide access to phone banking; not all do (see below for a list). Phone banking is often available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

You can use the system when you see the Bpay logo on a bill. The types of bill you can pay include water, gas, electricity, council rates, rents, school fees, credit cards and credit cards.

The retailer's code and a customer reference number should be shown on your bill, and you'll need to have your bank account details ready when you phone (credit cards aren't accepted for all bills).

The cost of using Bpay will vary from bank to bank. Some charge per transaction, others give you a number of free transactions per month and then charge for excess transactions.

OUR VERDICT

- **Direct debit** is by far the most convenient and cheapest way to pay bills. Once you organise a direct debit with your retailer, payment happens automatically and there are usually no transaction fees involved.
- **Credit cards** can be a convenient and cheap way to pay your bills if you have a card with an interest-free period and you can pay the whole amount outstanding within that period.
- **Bpay** (whether by phone or the Internet) is a convenient way to pay your bills. It's also cheap if you have a transaction account with a number of free transactions per month and you can stick within that transaction limit.
- Paying six bills at once at **Australia Post** with one cheque or one EFTPOS transaction is much cheaper than writing six individual cheques or making six EFTPOS transactions. This is a great way to save on bank and government charges.

Traditional options

■ **Cash:** You can still pay your bills in person at a branch of the billing organisation, a branch of the bank nominated by the retailer or (for some bills) at Australia Post.

Carrying a large amount of cash to pay a bill is not the most secure option. If cash is lost or stolen, it's almost impossible to recover.

■ **Mail:** It's not recommended to send cash through the mail. If you're going to post a payment, you'll need a personal cheque, bank cheque or money order. Another option is to fill out and return the credit card payment form if one is supplied with your bill.

■ **Cheque payments:** At the moment, writing a personal cheque each time you have to pay a bill is a costly exercise.

Currently each time you use your cheque account to pay a bill worth between \$100 and \$500, you pay the Commonwealth Government about 70 cents in debits tax.

The clearance time for cheques was recently reduced from five to three working days, which makes cheque payments faster than they used to be. However, if you want a transaction completed within a day, there are faster alternatives.

Before using cheques to pay your bills, look at the terms and conditions of your account. Find out whether your bank levies fees for each transaction or whether you have a number of free transactions per month. If you already use up your freebies with ATM withdrawals, for example, you might want to reconsider paying bills by cheque.

■ **Credit cards:** Credit cards are marketed as a convenient way to pay bills and earn loyalty points at the same time. This may be so if your credit card has an interest-free period and you can pay the whole balance within that interest-free period. If you have an outstanding balance, you'll be paying interest at between 12% and 17%.

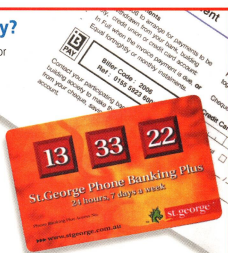
Phone and Internet

Some businesses have their own phone payment system. Call the number given on the bill and supply your customer account and credit card details. Several banks have extended Bpay to their Internet banking services. Other banks, credit unions and building societies are expected to move in that direction in the near future. □

Who belongs to Bpay?

The following banks belong to Bpay. For more information or to register to use the system, call the phone numbers.

- Adelaide Bank: 13 22 20 or 1300 652 220 (Interstate).
- ANZ: 13 13 14.
- Bank of Melbourne: 13 25 75.
- Bank of South Australia: 13 13 76.
- Bank West: 13 17 18.
- Bendigo Bank: 1300 366 666.
- Challenge Bank: 13 18 62.
- Commonwealth Bank: 13 22 21.
- National Australia Bank: 13 22 65.
- St George Bank: 1800 501 524.
- Westpac Bank: 13 20 32.
- Credit union phone banking: 1300 650 501.
- GIO Building Society: 13 61 37.
- Heritage Building Society: 13 14 22.



Tried, tested ... and true?

We thoroughly test just about anything that can be tested. Here, we test the types of product tests you'll find in other publications.

IN BRIEF

■ You can get different information from different kinds of tests. Some of it is a useful addition to the tests CHOICE does; some (such as that based on the opinions of only one or two people) is more suspect.

IT SEEMS EVERYONE'S JUMPING ON THE product test bandwagon — magazines, newspapers and even TV shows. Are these 'tests' simply pale imitations of what CHOICE does, or are they a useful contribution to consumer information?

We looked at a selection of tests from various newspapers and magazines and compared some of them with CHOICE's own tests (see *Tests on test*, page 44), showing what you may get, but also what you don't get.

Their testing conditions aren't as rigorous as ours and you might question their independence (see *How does CHOICE do it?*, page 43, for details). However, these tests can be fun to read and may provide

some useful information about the sorts of things you might consider when you're shopping around. Many involve people trying products out in their homes — just as a regular buyer would — though in a quite limited way. They're essentially

just the opinions of a few people, and many don't pretend to be anything more.

When we do this type of 'user trial' at CHOICE, we make sure we have a large enough panel of trialists to ensure more reliable results, and we disguise the brand-names of products to ensure our results aren't biased by personal preference or brand loyalty. This kind of information from a 'normal user' situation is a very worthwhile addition to laboratory testing procedures.

Types of test

There are lots of different types of test out there, but most of them fall into one of the following categories:

■ Products tested and compared according to certain criteria

Unlike most other 'tests' in the popular media, these reports test and compare products across a set of criteria, such as how well they do their job. We found a few test articles like this, including *Buyers Guide* in the AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY (see *Cordless phones*, page 44), *Buy IT* in the WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN and regular computer tests appearing in the SYDNEY MORNING HERALD's Icon liftout. Car tests in various newspapers and magazines would also normally fall into this category.

Miele M 636 EG

\$1199, 32-litre capacity

What Miele says: Nine power settings from 80-850 watts; program memory (allowing times and power settings used for a favourite dish to be stored and then recalled by pressing a single button); 15-minute combination microwave oven/griller; 15-minute pre-keep-warm function; stainless steel interior;

programmable start (up to 24 hours in advance). **What we say:** This is one sophisticated microwave oven. It comes in stylish black, has

a glass (not plastic) door and a stainless steel interior and steel cooking rack — just like a real oven.

Beyond the looks, the Miele functions like a real oven, too. It comes with a powerful grilling element, which can be run with the microwave function or on its own, to deliver the delicious brown topping on Lasagne or roast meats.

Manufacturer's claims and reviewer's impressions — but how does it compare with other models (see page 43)?

tried & tested



Champion swimmer Lisa Curry finds that being in and out of the water constantly takes its toll on her fine hair. So, she was the perfect candidate to test a selection of popular hair conditioners to see which were most effective. Here is how she rated the conditioners, plus her comments on each one

Sunsilk Silk Treatment Conditioner, \$3.70. Did the job nicely. Smelled pleasant, tangles came out easily and my hair styled well. 9/10

Pears Family Conditioner, \$3.45. Smelled nice and fresh. Did a great job of getting out the tangles. My hair felt lovely afterwards and styled easily. 9/10

Revlon Flex Moisturising Conditioner



Redken Extreme Conditioner, \$14.95. This one didn't suit my



Will one person's opinion match yours? See page 43.

However, we don't know how rigorous their tests are — they don't normally tell you exactly *how* they do them. And if they carry advertising for manufacturers of brands they're testing, the independence of their verdicts must be in doubt.

■ **Products tested, compared and rated by one person**
When only one person is testing a range of products, it helps if you can identify with them. For example, *Tried & tested* in GOOD MEDICINE magazine (see page 42) got Lisa Curry to test and rate different hair conditioners. Using a celebrity can be a good marketing tactic — it attracts you to read the piece — but you might want to ask yourself whether your needs are exactly the same as theirs — will the product they find best really be best for you? And will you have similar taste to the 'expert' who rates the 'Top 25 Beers' (see right) or 'Top 50 Chardonnays'? Even experts have different opinions, so we always use a group of experts for our alcohol tests.

■ **Several products rated and compared, but each tested by only one or two people**

An example of this kind of test is *Tried & tested* in the Melbourne HERALD-SUN's Sunday Magazine. The products in this case are usually cosmetics, and each product is tested by only one or two people (see *Lipsticks*, page 44, for more on this type of test). The problem with this rating is that one person's '8 out of 10' may not be the same as another's; you need more people for a rating that lets you make a confident choice.

■ **Products trialled and described, but not compared or rated**

Some 'tests' don't attempt to score the products or even compare brands — they simply try them out and tell you what the testers thought of each one.

Consumer Society (in the SYDNEY MORNING HERALD's Domain liftout) does regular 'tests' of household products: its testers give their overall impression of the product, comment on some of the good or bad points, but don't attempt to score it (see *Toasters*, page 44, for an example). As a result, they can't compare brands or models. Domain says its purpose is to let readers know what products and features are on the market.

Another example is the 'test' (see far left) of microwaves from the Sydney SUN-HERALD's SundayLife! magazine. We're given manufacturer's claims and the reviewer's opinion, but there's no comparison between models, and no overall impression.

(Continued overleaf)

6 good beer

25

BEST BI



THE TOP BEERS

- 1 Pilsner Urquell (Czech Republic, \$2.95)
- 2 Chimney (Oregon, \$5)
- 3 Guinness (Ireland, \$3.75/400ml)
- 4 Samuel Adams Boston Lager (US, \$3.60/350ml)
- 5 Burratorragh Bock (Australia, \$6.70/350ml)
- 6 La Fin Du Monde (Canada, \$5.40/341ml)
- 7 Hoegaarden White (Belgium, \$3.95)
- 8 Cooper's Pale Ale (US, \$2.95/350ml)

Will you agree with one expert's ranking?

How does CHOICE do it?

... with commitment, scientific rigour, thoroughness and independence.

Our tests and trials have a different aim from the lifestyle supplements — we're trying to give you the best *independent* information you need to make your purchasing decisions, which can be expensive and affect your lives for some years. To do this, we follow rigorous procedures:

- Our market research department gathers all the necessary information on the products to be tested from retailers and manufacturers on a national basis.
- A test program is designed to give you the information you really need about the different models.
- A buying team buys products in the marketplace like an ordinary consumer. We never take products as gifts or on loan from manufacturers, to safeguard our independence.
- Tests and trials are conducted based on rigorous national or international standards and our own research into what you think is important.
- In user trials, products are disguised so that people aren't influenced by brands. The trials are conducted in a controlled environment so that each product is used in a similar way and so can be fairly evaluated and compared.
- Before publication, manufacturers are informed of the test results for their products and encouraged to comment.



■ All the test and research data and the article itself are thoroughly checked by our verification department. We only publish what we can confidently stand by — in court if necessary.

It's an expensive and time-consuming exercise, but we see it as the only way to give you what we think you're entitled to and need to make informed purchase decisions.

Tests on test

Lipsticks

CHOICE tested long-lasting lipsticks in September last year, and we were interested to see how our tests compared with those of the Melbourne

HERALD-SUN Sunday Magazine's *Tried & Tested*.
■ **How the HERALD-SUN tested lipsticks**

Five testers were each given one lipstick to try for up to three months. All had a list of points to consider and questions to answer when giving their final opinions about the lipsticks. The lipsticks were samples sent by the cosmetics companies, and there was no attempt to disguise the brands.

■ How CHOICE tested lipsticks

Twenty women tested 15 lipsticks for ease of application, durability and feel. The lipstick was worn for one day, and ratings took place every couple of hours. The brand names on the lipsticks were disguised and they were all of similar colour, so it wasn't immediately obvious what brand they were using. Our laboratory tests established whether the lipsticks could be removed easily from clothing in the wash, and their stability at high temperatures.

The verdict:

Trying a lipstick over a period of time, as testers in *Tried & Tested* did, will give you some idea of a lipstick's quality and performance over time.

However, we're sceptical about the value of accepting only one person's opinion. In our trial, some brands rated consistently higher than others on average, despite a range of opinion within each brand.

Tried & Tested

Winter lipsticks

Elizabeth Arden Exceptional Lipstick - Tempest \$31.49

6-9 Beautiful, rich dark color with smooth texture and applied easily. Very moist and reasonably long lasting.

Aveda - Petition Flower \$28.39

Coast color 1 long lasting, and



in a row, if they could cope with a single slice of toast without overbrowning one side, how well they performed with regular bread, muffins and crumpets, and how safe and easy they were to use (taking into account the special needs of children and people with vision or co-ordination difficulties).

The verdict:

Domain's panellists made a number of useful observations about features, and that was the primary purpose of the trial. One panellist commented on the 'cool-touch wall' of her toaster — yet this (and another) either didn't do well in or didn't pass our surface temperature test, and might burn you if you accidentally touched it.

As for making good toast, all Domain's panellists said they were happy with the way the models toasted, but they could only compare the new toaster with their old toaster (or griller, in the case of one man). They couldn't give any information about how new toasters compare with each other.

Buyers Guide

TRIED & TESTED
Domain's Weekly
4 ★★★★★

■ Audioline CDL500H

We paid \$299

While the speech clarity was good, this phone picked up interference and static once the caller moved about 10 metres from the base station. This model has an additional handset and charger, 14 days' standby time, 10 hours of continuous talk time and an answering machine. For stockists, call 1800 622 881.

RATING	Answer Machine	Conversation Range	Interference Problems	Standby Time
★★★★★	YES	★★★	★★★★	★★★★
★★★★	YES	★★	★★	★★

Cordless phones

Of all the tests we found, *Buyers Guide* in the **AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY** was at first glance the closest to CHOICE style, where several brands are tested, rated and compared.

■ How AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY tested cordless phones

The manufacturers and distributors loaned *Buyers Guide* the phones for testing, and they had to be returned afterwards. Phones were tested for conversation range and how easy they were to use. Interference, such as white noise and other conversations, was noted. Standby time and talk time were assumed from information in the instructions.

■ How CHOICE tested cordless phones

CHOICE tested and rated conversation range (including the longest distance at which a dial tone was possible), talk time, standby time, speech quality and loudness, and ease of use.

The verdict:

CHOICE thinks it's important to test all claims, rather than taking the manufacturer's word for it, and we take nothing for granted. For example, we found the manufacturers' stated standby times sometimes vastly over- or underestimated the time we measured. And buying the products on test (as well as carrying no ads in the magazine) helps maintain the independence of the testing.

THE CONSUMER SOCIETY POP ART

main's reader panel tests retro-look toaster



RUSSELL HOBBS CLASSIC TOASTER

Tester: Erica Power, business consultant.
Price: \$69.95.
Stockists: Small-electrical retailers and department stores.

Features: Extra lift lever. Cool touch switch. Cancel button. Fries and reheat functions. Removable crumb tray. Extra-wide bread slot.
Comments: I was able to toast my sandwiches and the like on my conventional toaster — usually I have to use a special

Toasters

The **SYDNEY MORNING HERALD Domain's Consumer Society** tested four toasters in October last year.

Three of them were among those we tested in our last test of toasters (CHOICE, March 1999), which puts us in a good position to appraise their panel's opinions.

■ How Domain tested toasters

They chose four people who reflect the readership of the magazine — young professionals — and gave each of them a different toaster. They used the toasters for about a week, and then answered specific questions about features and performance.

■ How CHOICE tested toasters

We tested 20 toasters, and all were subjected to the same battery of tests to determine how evenly they browned toast, whether they'd do this five times



When a business goes bust

If you're owed money by a company that's stopped trading, be prepared for a long wait — and a financial loss: there's no special law that protects consumers in this situation. We offer some tips for being wise *before* the event.

OVER THE SIX YEARS TO 1997, MORE than 6700 businesses on average failed each year in Australia, according to Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) figures. The number for the 1997-98 financial year was down, but there were still nearly 5000 company insolvencies, and a similar number of business-related bankruptcies. (An incorporated company that's insolvent goes into receivership, liquidation or administration; an insolvent person or unincorporated business goes into bankruptcy.)

Many business failures won't directly affect consumers, but there are a few instances when you can get caught out.

- You may have paid fully in advance for or put a deposit on goods you haven't received yet when the company goes bust.
- You may have a gift voucher from, an unfinished contract with or a warranty claim against a company.
- A company may still have property that you left for repair.

As the recent collapse of the music and electronic retailer Brashs showed (see *Spend it straightaway*, page 46), consumers generally have few special rights when it comes to retrieving their money.

You mightn't have thought of yourself as extending credit to the business when you paid for goods or services you hadn't received yet, but that's how you're treated by the law — no differently from a business creditor who's owed money by the insolvent company. You're both 'unsecured creditors', which means you're owed money for



which you haven't got a security (a registered charge over the company or business proprietor's property, taken as a security when lending funds).

What to do

If you have a claim against a company that's become insolvent, contact the company immediately and ask for the administrator or liquidator's name and telephone number, if one has been appointed. Find out from them what arrangements are to be made for you — keep a note of your discussion. You'll probably have to register your claim in writing. Attending meetings for creditors is a good opportunity to find out about the company's affairs and ask questions.

When an administrator or liquidator hasn't yet been appointed, talk to the company directly and try to come to an agreement. If this fails, or the company ignores you altogether, ask your local consumer affairs or fair trading office for advice. Alternatively, you can get legal advice and/or establish the debt by action in a Small Claims or Consumer Claims court or tribunal (fees and claim limits are different in each state).

If you're owed more than \$2000 you can apply to the Supreme Court to have the company

IN BRIEF

■ There's no special law that protects consumers when a trader goes out of business. Getting all your money back is unlikely ...

■ ... unless you pay by credit card, when your card provider may be able to reverse the transaction (see page 47).



SPEND IT STRAIGHTAWAY



Some time during 1997, Nikki, of Bexley, NSW, received a special thank you from her then employer for a job well done: a gift voucher from the music and electronic retailer Brashs. She went and spent it straightaway on computer software.

Her partner Michael, however, didn't act as quickly and missed out. He had also been given gift vouchers for his birthday and Christmas, but hadn't spent them by the time the large retailer struck financial problems. In February 1998, Brashs was placed into voluntary administration — for the second time in four years.

Brashs is currently under a Deed of Company Arrangement and all of its assets have been sold to pay creditors. The collapse was one of the highest-profile retail insolvencies, with significant repercussions for consumers. In fact, consumers with gift vouchers were a major issue — the total value of vouchers is estimated at \$3.5 million —

and the Brashs administrators announced early on they wouldn't honour them.

The administrators finally offered consumers who had gift vouchers that dated pre-February 7, 1998 the option of participating in a 'two for one offer' — Brashs would honour the vouchers only if consumers spent twice their value. Those who didn't participate in that offer and registered their claim ranked as ordinary unsecured creditors, who'll achieve a return of around 25 cents in the dollar.

Michael didn't want to spend money to get his gift voucher honoured and so had to forgo his birthday and Christmas gifts. As for future presents, Nikki isn't too keen on gift vouchers. But if she does get another one, she'll make sure she spends it immediately.

wound up, but considering the legal fees involved in this sort of action, and the likely outcome, it's unlikely to be a good option for consumers.

If you can't find the company — say its premises are locked up and the phone's been disconnected — you can do a company search through ASIC to find out the name of the insolvency administrator (see *Minimising problems*, right, for how to do this).

Divvying up what's left

After you've registered your claim with the company's insolvency administrator, you'll have to wait — possibly for quite some time — before you and other unsecured creditors receive any return, and in many cases that can be rather small or nothing at all.

The payment of claims of secured creditors (who lent money to the insolvent company against a security), employee entitlements and land tax debts (in case the insolvent company's premises are to be sold) usually take priority before the remainder of funds is distributed to unsecured creditors. Needless to say, in many insolvency cases there's little money left to distribute at that stage. As one insolvency practitioner we spoke to pointed out, you're likely to get less than 50 cents for each dollar you're owed, regardless of the type of insolvency, and very often there's nothing left for unsecured creditors. □

Insolvency administrators

A company that can't pay its debts on time can be put under the control of an outside person — a receiver (or receiver and manager), a liquidator or an administrator. Some of their duties concerning payments to unsecured creditors (among them ordinary consumers) are outlined below.

■ A **receiver** (or a receiver and manager) is appointed by a secured creditor — usually a bank or financier who has a 'charge', such as a mortgage over all or part of the company's assets; in special circumstances a receiver is appointed by the court.

The receiver acts for the secured creditors. Unsecured creditors have no legal right to obtain payment from a receiver.

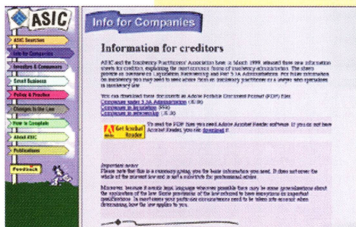
■ A **liquidator's** duty is to *all* the company's creditors. The liquidator is appointed either by the court on application, usually from creditors, or by the company's directors.

After the winding-up costs and certain priority claims have been paid, the liquidator must distribute available funds to creditors.

■ An **administrator** is appointed by a liquidator, a provisional liquidator, a secured creditor or by the company's directors. (In the latter case it's a voluntary administration — a temporary measure and the most common type of insolvency administration.)

The administrator holds all the powers of the company and its directors, their powers being suspended for the time of the administration. The administrator meets creditors, investigates the company's situation and reports back to the creditors, who then decide whether to end the administration and return the company to trading, enter a deed of company arrangement through which the company will pay all or part of its debts, or wind up the company.

ASIC has useful information for creditors on its website:
www.asic.gov.au



Minimising problems

Sometimes you can't avoid paying money upfront for goods or services. Below are some hints to help you minimise your chances of losing money.

- If you're asked for a **deposit**, don't agree to pay too much — about 10% is reasonable.
- Avoid upfront payments whenever possible, but if they're unavoidable and you have a **credit card**, use it for such payments. If the credit card voucher is processed but you don't receive the goods or services you've paid for, contact your credit provider immediately.

If you used your **Mastercard, Visa or Bankcard** the credit provider will reverse the transaction and 'backcharge' the amount to the insolvent merchant's bank. If this bank can't retrieve the money from the merchant, it'll wear the loss.

'Backcharging' isn't part of all credit providers' policies. **American Express and Diners Club** told us they deal with such cases individually, so contact them as soon as possible — they may be able to help.

- If you're contracting a tradesperson, check their **credentials** and ask for references. For more hints on how to choose a tradesperson, see our article in the April 1999 issue of CHOICE.

■ Choose a **licensed trader**. In industries that deal with large sums of consumer funds (for example, real estate agents, travel agents, motor dealers or prepaid funerals) licensed traders must contribute to a compensation fund to recompense consumers if the trader becomes insolvent, or they have trust funds where money paid is held until the product or service is delivered.

■ If a lot of money is involved and you really want to be sure before you fork it out, do a **company search** — or a name search of the company's director(s) — at an Australian Securities & Investments Commission (ASIC) Business Centre, or online. ASIC business centres are located in each capital city and in Geelong, Gold Coast, Newcastle and Townsville. For fees ranging from \$10 to \$31 (depending on the type of search), you can find details about the company, its history, its directors and their involvement in other enterprises.

A company search is also useful to find the name of the insolvency administrator, if you find you've been burnt.

■ When you leave something for **repair**, label the item with your name, get a receipt and keep a record of any serial number and other details. If the trader goes bust and your property is still there, you should be able to retrieve it if it's clearly yours. You'll have to pay for work

already completed, but getting a warranty for the work done may be more problematic — talk to the liquidator or administrator.

If the company disposed of your property — or it was lost — before an insolvency practitioner was appointed, you'll have to register a claim for the value of the goods.

■ If you have a **warranty claim** against a dealer or retailer who has stopped trading, you'll have to get your goods repaired elsewhere and then register your claim with the insolvency administrator. However, a manufacturer's warranty will still be honoured if the dealer or retailer stops trading.

■ House renovations or other longer-term work should be settled in **progress payments** for the work that's completed and certified by the appropriate authorities. This way you shouldn't be out of pocket — just inconvenienced — if the company folds up before the job's finished. The insolvency administrator may choose to have the contract finished to obtain the outstanding balance.

If you've paid for work that hasn't been completed and the **contract can't be finished**, you'll have to register your claim for damages with the insolvency administrator. You'll then have to find a new contractor and agree to new terms, which probably won't include a warranty for the work already completed.

■ If you're paying for something on **layby** and it's still in stock when the company becomes insolvent, the liquidator or administrator will probably be happy to sell it to you. But if the goods are gone, you'll have to register your claim against the company.

■ If you're affected by a business insolvency and need further **advice**, contact your local fair trading or consumer affairs office.



● RECALLS & BANS

If you find a recall or ban not on our list, please let us know. Companies often rent 1800 numbers for a couple of months after the recall is announced. If the number given is no longer operating, phone the manufacturer or retailer direct.

THE PRODUCT: Inchcape

Distributors Australia has recalled **alloy wheels** fitted to some **Volkswagen Golfs** (model year 1999) as an optional extra and to all **Golf Cabriolets** (model year 1999).

The problem: The wheel bolts used may not be compatible with the wheel and may loosen. If no action is taken, successive wheel bolts could become loose and the wheel could eventually fall off.

What to do: Contact your nearest Volkswagen dealer for inspection and, if necessary, rectification. If, while driving the vehicle prior to rectification, there are sudden steering wheel vibrations or unusual noises, stop immediately. Check the wheels for tightness using the wheel wrench in the on-board tool kit. For more information call Volkswagen on 1800 637 181.

THE PRODUCT: Coles

Supermarkets and Bushells Tea have recalled a **eucalyptus and honey tea recipe** appearing on a **Great Meals Ideas brochure**. The brochure, in stores from April 19, 1999, has a first anniversary edition logo on its front page and the recipe appears on its back page as an accompaniment to Lamb Drivers Pie with Creamy Sweet Potato Mash.

The problem: The recipe contains eucalyptus oil, which could pose a severe risk to human health.

What to do: Don't make the tea. Destroy the recipe card or return it to any Coles store. For more information, call Bushells Tea on 1800 801 885.

THE PRODUCT: Isuzu-General

Motors Australia has recalled **Holden 1998 Jackaroes** with vehicle identification numbers (VIN) from JACUBS73GW100023 to JACUBS73GW103249 inclusive. The VIN is on the compliance plate, under the bonnet of the car, on the firewall.

The problem: The vacuum pump check valve in the vehicle's diesel engine may malfunction. An insufficient vacuum could be supplied to the braking system, causing poor brake performance and an increased stopping distance.

What to do: Return the vehicle to any Holden dealer for rectification or call Holden on 03 9644 6622.

THE PRODUCT: Nestlé has recalled **Nescafé Latte, Mocha flavour** coffee mix, in 240 g flip-top plastic containers, marked "made in Canada" on the side.

The problem: Fragments of glass have been found in some containers. It's believed they were introduced during production.

What to do: Don't drink it. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund, or call Nestlé on 1800 069 678 between 8.30 am and 5.30 pm EST, Monday to Friday.

THE PRODUCT: IKEA has recalled **Mula stacking rings**, sold in Australia since 1993, recommended for children aged 18 months or over. The wooden toy consists of a stick on a base plate, onto which the child stacks coloured rings, topped by a red ball.

The problem: The ball could pose a choking hazard.

What to do: Don't let children play with it. Return it to IKEA for a refund or a cube to replace the ball. Call your local IKEA or (02) 9418 2744 for more information.

THE PRODUCT: Peugeot has recalled **Peugeot 406** (model year 1997) vehicles manufactured between June 1996 and August 1998. The affected vehicles have vehicle identification numbers (VIN):

VF388RFV80090207-80549623
VF388RFV80169069-80493475
VF388RFV80538013-8058515

The VIN is on the compliance plate, under the bonnet, on the firewall.

The problem: A fuel hose in the engine bay may leak fuel, posing a fire risk.

What to do: Return the vehicle to any Peugeot dealer for a replacement hose, or call Peugeot on (02) 9828 9110.

THE PRODUCT: BMW Australia is recalling all **BMW 3 Series sedans** produced from June 1998 onwards.

The problems:

- Under certain conditions, the **side airbags** may unexpectedly deploy.
- On a small number of vehicles, it's possible that the clip between the brake pedal and the main hydraulic unit has not been installed correctly, and could cause brake failure.

What to do: Take the car to your BMW dealer to get the airbag control unit reprogrammed and the brake clip examined. For further information phone the BMW Access Centre on 1800 813 299.

THE PRODUCT: International Trucks Australia has recalled all **Iveco TurboDaily 4 x 2** vehicles.

The problem: Damaged brake vacuum hoses on some vehicles have caused a loss of vacuum assistance to the braking system, making the brake pedal difficult to depress.

What to do: Contact an authorised International dealer or branch to arrange a replacement vacuum hose. International is contacting original owners of these vehicles. Phone (03) 9238 2345 for more information.

THE PRODUCT: G-Star has recalled all **Fiz Bathing Soda**, 300 g plastic bottles, sold nationwide since July 17, 1998.

The problem: It's possible that the bathing soda may expand inside the plastic bottle and burst. (The bathing soda itself is not harmful if used correctly.)

What to do: If the bottle shows no signs of deformation, return the product to place of purchase for a full refund. If there are signs of deformation, the following steps should be taken:

- While wearing glasses, wrap the bottle in a large towel and place it in an empty sink. Keeping the bottle covered with the towel, carefully loosen the cap to release pressure.

- Replace the cap and return the product to place of purchase for a full refund.

If you have any concerns, contact G-Star on (03) 9529 2344.

THE PRODUCT: Dibs Confectionery has recalled the following Easter products:

- **Chocolate coated marshmallow Easter bunnies**, 35 g bars, sold singly and in packs of five.
- **Chocolate coated caramel centre marshmallow Easter eggs**, 6 x 25 g.

The problem: Tests have revealed mould contamination and rancidity in samples of the products.

What to do: Don't eat them. Return them to place of purchase for a refund. Phone (02) 9698 7770 for further information.

THE PRODUCT: Hallas Trading has issued a voluntary safety recall for **Ella Baché Oily Skin Lotion**.

The problem: The lotion contains coal tar, which may be carcinogenic.

What to do: If you want to return the product for a refund, contact Hallas Trading on (02) 9438 3911.

THE PRODUCT: Honda has recalled the following vehicles with the vehicle identification numbers (VINs) listed below:

■ 1997 Accord sedan

JHMCDS5400C 318453-319619
JHMCDS5500C 319617-320368
JHMCDS6200C 319399-320387
JHMCDS6400C 318452-320399

■ 1997 Odyssey

JHMR18700C 206648-207332
JHMR18800C 206525-207326

■ 1996-1998 Prelude

JHMB81400C 400133-400136
JHMB82400C 400135
JHMB811700C 300284-300320
JHMB821500C 400240-400293
JHMB822500C 400242-400299
JHMB851500C 000064-001309
JHMB852500C 000071-001307
JHMB861400C 000042-002929
JHMB861500C 000006-002903
JHMB862400C 000010-002925
JHMB851500C 000067-200331
JHMB852500C 000069-200301
JHMB861400C 000016-200639
JHMB861500C 000009-200541
JHMB862400C 000011-200630

■ 1996-1998 Legend

JHMK496200C 000020-002603
JHMK496200C 100026-103680
JHMK496200C 200731-201141

The problem: Faulty ball joints may result in a loss of steering control.

What to do: Contact an authorised Honda dealer to get the ball joint replaced as soon as possible. For more information phone Honda Australia on 1800 804 954 Monday to Friday between 8.30 am and 5.30 pm EST.

THE PRODUCT: Ford is recalling **AU model Falcons** and **Fairlanes** built between August 1998 and March 24, 1999.

The problem: A bolt in the front suspension may not have been tightened sufficiently and, in extreme conditions, the bolt could become loose and fall out, potentially affecting the car's steering.

What to do: Contact your Ford dealer and arrange to have the bolt inspected. If you want more information, phone Ford's Customer Assistance Centre on 1800 333 306.

Weekly updates of recalls and bans are posted on the CHOICE Web site at www.choice.com.au. You can also email us any recalls or bans not on this list at ausconsumer@choice.com.au.

CHOICE Products

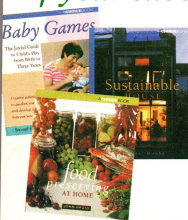
Phone Subscriptions: (02) 9577 3399 General: (02) 9577 3333 **Fax** (02) 9577 3355

Payment method

INS/9907

Write to CHOICE Consumer Services, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, phone (02) 9577 3399, fax (02) 9577 3355 or email to ausconsumer@choice.com.au. Please include your subscriber number (found in the top corner of your CHOICE address label) or have it ready by you when you phone us.

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ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN CONSUMERS' ASSOCIATION

The Australian Consumers' Association is a non-profit, non-party-political organisation, established in 1959 to provide consumers with information and advice on goods, services, health and personal finances, and to help maintain and enhance the quality of life for consumers. It is a Council member of Consumers International.

We are completely independent. We buy all the products we test at random in the marketplace; we never accept products to be tested as gifts or loans from manufacturers or retailers. We are not beholden to any commercial, government or union interests, and we don't accept advertising, paid or unpaid. Our income is derived from the sale of CHOICE and our other publications and products.

We test and rate products and services. Our ratings are usually based on quality without regard to price, and are derived from lab tests, expert judgments and reader surveys. If a product is high in quality and relatively low in price, we deem it a **Best Buy**. A rating applies only to the brand and model tested, not to other models sold under the same brand name, unless so noted. We can't conduct special tests or provide information about tested products beyond what appears in CHOICE. Financial information in CHOICE is of a general nature, and is not intended to be advice on individual investments which should or should not be made.

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We represent and act in consumers' interests. We lobby and campaign on behalf of consumers to promote their rights, to influence government policy, and to ensure consumer issues have a high profile in the public arena.

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Test Research provides fee-for-service testing and research on consumer products, services and regulatory issues for other consumer organisations, government and industry.

Manager: Raja Rajagopal. **Contact:** Jeanette Dwyer on (02) 9577 3399.

Twelve-month INDEX

August 1998 — July 1999

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* indicates an update of a previous report, additions or corrections to reports, small follow-up items or letters.

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theHARD word



You'd think they'd know ...

According to the label, this **Mars lite** — with 11.2% fat — has less than half the fat of 'leading chocolate bars'. But regular **Mars** bars are 18% fat, so **Mars lite** in fact has more than half the fat of its stablemate. Could this mean regular **Mars** isn't a 'leading chocolate bar'? Well, no, actually — according to the confectionery industry association, **Mars** bars are the biggest selling chocolate bar in Australia.

We also checked out the fat levels for the other chocolate products that make up the top 10 brands, and it turns out there are three more (**Violet Crumble**, **Smarties** and **Crunchie**) with less than 22% fat, making **Mars lite**'s claim pretty tenuous, all in all.



INGREDIENTS: DICED APPLE, DICED TOMATO, DICED ONION, TOMATO PASTE, AUSTRALIAN SULTANAS, APRICOTS, WHITE WINEGAR, APPLE JUICE, FRUCTOSE, MAIZE STARCH, LEMON JUICE, CANOLA OIL, CINNAMON, GINGER, ALLSPICE, PEPPER, SEA SALT, WATER ADDED.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION	
Energy	312 kJ
Fat	1.1 g
Carbohydrate	10.3 g
Protein	0.5 g
Sodium	10 mg
Potassium	120 mg
Cholesterol	None detected

Produced for Freedom Foods (Aust.) Pty. Ltd.
ACN 066 372 181
Unit 11A, 46-52 Keys Road,
Moorabbin, Vic. 3189
www.freedomfoods.com.au

PRODUCT OF AUSTRALIA

Is this some sort of competition?

Like how many health claims can we get on the label?

For a start, chutney isn't known for its high fat content — in fact a similar product (making no 'Low Fat' claim) contains no fat at all.

It supposedly contains 'No added sugar' presumably meaning sucrose, but it does contain added fructose — another form of sugar.

Let's see, what else is there? "Gluten free", "Wheat free", "Dairy free" ... just like a regular tomato chutney, then.

And finally, to top it all off, it's approved by the Australian Natural Therapies Association. Just what are you supposed to do with it?

How about a little help?

The *hard word* would like to thank all the readers who have responded with examples of outrageous ads, promotions and products. Thanks to H Ash, F Butler, H Dimsey, M Smyrk and M Trench for their contributions to this month's *The hard word*. Please keep sending them in.

If you have any examples that you think deserve to be on this page, send them to *The hard word*, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, or email your suggestions to thehardword@choice.com.au.

'Free' home delivery?

So why is it 10% cheaper to buy the nappies from the shop?

IM NAPPIES & BABY GOODS - FREE HOME DELIVERY

IM NAPPIES

night	\$24
light	\$30
it	\$34
night	\$39
Junior	\$43

Packs of 100

STANDARD FIRST QUALITY NAPPIES

Newborn Night	\$23
Medium Day/Night	\$25
Large Day/Night	\$26
Extra Large Night	\$33
Junior	\$40

All in Packs of 100

TOP BABY SHOP - For all your Baby Needs

No preservative, flavour or colour added.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Servings per pack	1
Serving Size	100g

INGREDIENT LISTING

PEAS, MINT FLAVOUR.

Peas, do us a flavour!

10% Discount on all Nappies Bought in Store



BABY GIFT BASKETS and MANCHESTER AT FACTORY PRICES!!!

Australian Made
100% Guaranteed

9548 8324
or
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